



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
May 22 – 29, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Inuit Broadcasting Corp. gets \$1.3 million for new TV shows

May 22, 2015 3 days 21 hours ago



IQUALIT, NU - The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation will receive \$1.3 million in funding from the federal government to support the production of 40 hours of original new television programming to be filmed and aired in Inuktitut.

Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, made the announcement Friday on behalf of Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, Shelly Glover.

Aimed at Inuit living in Nunavut, the IBC will produce five series, including children's program called *Takuginai*, a cooking show known as *Niqitsiat*; a comedy series called *Qanurli*; a documentary series featuring community members called *Ilinniq*, and a live, current events call-in show entitled *Isumavit*.

The funding is being provided through the Northern Aboriginal Broadcasting funding element of the [Aboriginal Peoples' Program](#).

"Our traditional language is an important part of who we are, and I am proud to be part of a government that encourages the use of Inuit traditional languages in Nunavut", said Minister Aglukkaq, in a statement. "With this support, the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation will be able to promote the Inuktitut language through television programming for all ages, directly benefiting Inuit communities."

"IBC is proud to carry on its commitment to promoting and preserving the Inuit language", added IBC chair Madeleine d'Argencourt. "With the support of the Government of Canada, we will continue to strengthen our language in our homes through the production of television and Web series, reaching all age groups."

www.pch.gc.ca

www.nac.nu.ca

Direct Link: <https://cartt.ca/article/inuit-broadcasting-corp-gets-13-million-new-tv-shows>

Odawa powwow taking place in Nepean this weekend

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 23, 2015 1:15 PM ET Last Updated: May 23, 2015 2:50 PM ET



An elder takes part in a powwow in Ottawa in 2014. The Odawa Native Friendship Centre's 39th annual powwow is taking place May 23-24, 2015. (The Canadian Press)

The annual powwow run by the Odawa Native Friendship Centre has always been a big celebration of aboriginal culture in Ottawa, but this year its organizers are trying to bring the gathering to an even broader audience.



Shady Hafez, 23, was raised in Ottawa by his Syrian grandparents, but spent weekends with his mother's family in Kitigan Zibi. (CBC News)

Odawa's 39th Grassroots Competition Pow Wow runs from Saturday to Sunday at Wesley Clover Parks in Nepean, and it includes competition powwow dancing and singing on both days.

There's also an aboriginal arts and craft market featuring clothing, art, sculptures and trinkets, and aboriginal cuisine including tacos, dried fish, bannock, wild rice salads and more.

The grand entry for the powwow begins at noon on both days, featuring dancers in full regalia, elders and honoured guests carrying flags and staffs, dancing the pow wow into session.

But this year there will be a few more flags than usual, and from some unexpected places.

The powwow's organizers have invited delegates from various embassies, including representatives of the European Union, Jamaica and Venezuela. They've also invited a local Imam.

Shady Hafez, a member of the powwow organizing committee, told CBC Radio's *All in a Day* he's passionate about bringing aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultures together, in part because of his own background.

Hafez, 23, was raised in Ottawa by his Syrian grandparents, but spent weekends with his mother's family in Kitigan Zibi. He attended powwows from a young age and began dancing in his teens.

Some powwow etiquette

- If you want a picture, ask the person you're taking a picture of first.

- Don't refer to the outfits as costumes, which implies dressing up as something you're not. Call them outfits, regalia or clothes.
- During certain songs people have to stand up and there are moments where taking pictures is not allowed, but the MC will let everyone know.
- During the competition spectators aren't allowed to participate in the dancing, but at other times it's OK.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/odawa-powwow-taking-place-in-nepean-this-weekend-1.3085123>

Métis fest draws a crowd

By [Andrew Bates](#), Today staff

Sunday, May 24, 2015 5:53:55 MDT PM



Conlin Delbaere-Sawchuk of the Metis Fiddler Quartet claps along as siblings Nicholas and Alyssa perform behind him at the Metis Festival Friday.

Over 1,800 people got a sampling of Métis culture Friday at the Fort McMurray Métis Festival.

The sixth-annual festival was held during the day at the Métis grounds in Gregoire, featuring campfires, games, Métis cuisine and music. Organizer Renee Stanley said the turnout was a mix of former residents and newcomers.

“A lot of people came back just to visit for the day, people that lived here, people that just moved here and didn’t know anything about it,” she said.

Stanley said about 1,500 students attended throughout the day, which were arranged through FNMI liaisons.

“We had one young student ... who’s doing a canoe trip to Fort Chip,” she said. “He got a lot of information, he’s coming back next week.”

Stanley said they also recieved buses of visitors from seniors in long-term care, Rotary House, and from the Salvation Army. Fort McMurray Métis local 1935 general manager Kyle Harrietha said it was a chance to bring in the community.

“I think annual events like the Métis Festival ... are a great opportunity for our friends, relatives and neigbours in the broader community to come together and celebrate the Métis culture.”

Some of the musicians included the Asham Stompers, the Métis Fiddler Quartet, Beverly Lambert, known as Métis Bev, and the Kelsea Scout Band, headlined by local eight-year-old Kelsea Boostrom.

“(The) music was amazing,” Harrietha said. “Kids, elders were up jigging and dancing. Any time there’s fiddle music it’s going to be a good time.”

Direct Link: <http://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/2015/05/24/metis-fest-draws-a-crowd>

Channelling connections between aboriginal artists

Edmonton Arts Council hosts three-day summit to build community

By Julia LeConte, Edmonton Journal May 28, 2015 7:15 AM



Aaron Paquette with his Grandin LRT station installation

EDMONTON - How have Edmonton’s aboriginal artists worked in the past? What are the ways they want to work in the future? How can the Edmonton Arts Council (EAC) support that in a significant way? What is the community’s vision for itself? Where can those visions combine, collaborate and synergize?

Those are just a few of the questions the EAC would like to ask the city's many diverse indigenous artists, and that they'd like artists to ask themselves and each other, says Christine Sokaymoh Frederick, the EAC's Aboriginal Initiatives Committee chair.

To find the answers, the not-for-profit organization is hosting Channeling Connections — a three-day symposium ending Friday, May 29 at the Shaw Conference Centre that is bringing together indigenous artists with art directors, art organizations and funding bodies from across the Prairies.

The event has been a long time in the works, says Frederick. "We've had dialogues before, but this is a culmination of work. In terms of engaging the aboriginal community, there's been nothing quite like this in the past."

The Number 1 objective, she says, is connecting indigenous artists with each other and with opportunities, to build relationships and possible collaborations.

The EAC will also use the summit as a way to self-improve.

"We have a desire to change how the Edmonton Arts Council engages aboriginal artists," says Frederick.

"We want to look at best practices, broadening perspectives, look at how we are supporting the community and how that reflects the cultural diversity here in Edmonton and where aboriginal people sit within the community."

Channelling Connections kicked off Wednesday night with a live blessing performed by four elders, followed by dinner and a live fusion performance that included musicians, dancers, visual artists and poets.

Thursday and Friday's agendas include icebreakers, networking events, professional development sessions, public art talks and workshops. A highlight will be a Thursday-afternoon discussion about how to translate one's work into a public-art display, hosted by Aaron Paquette and Destiny Swiderski. Swiderski's large wood wall — a three-dimensional image of a forest — graces the Mill Woods Seniors Centre and Multicultural Facility, while Paquette's stunning reconciliation mural hangs at the Grandin LRT station.

Frederick also describes a "field trip-y" excursion to Edmonton Public Library Makerspace at Stanley A. Milner Library — another important aspect of the gathering is to raise awareness about what city spaces are available for artists to work in.

Other topics covered will include marketing and communications for aboriginal artists in the Edmonton area, as well as discussions about what it's like working as a rural artist versus an urban one.

Also in attendance among the delegates are Blackstone actor Ron Walker and Aboriginal Role Model of Alberta Art Award 2009 winner MJ Belcourt-Moses, who works in traditional crafts such as fish scale art and moose and caribou hair work.

Frederick hopes the event will unite artists of all disciplines. “Our former poet laureate Anna Marie Sewell told me one time, ‘One of the ways we can strengthen the community is having aboriginal artists know each other’s work.’

“We can actually bring people together and show them what work they’re doing. What styles they’re doing.”

Frederick also emphasizes how the conference will give artists an understanding of the EAC, and how they can benefit from it directly.

“There’s some really wonderful aboriginal arts organizations in this city and everybody in the community would benefit from knowing more about them,” says Frederick.

“There’s so much we can gain by gathering together, understanding each other, sharing perspectives and building upon millennia of history and those relationships.”

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Channelling+connections+between+aboriginal+artists/11086965/story.html>

Buffy Sainte-Marie on Her New Album and Legacy as a Native American Activist

May 27, 2015 11:10 am by [Alex Frank](#)

The term “folk singer” was attached to **Buffy Sainte-Marie** early—in the sixties, when she came up through the same Greenwich Village scene that launched **Joni Mitchell** and **Bob Dylan**—but those two words have never really done her justice. On her new album, *Power in the Blood*, there are moments of hard-edged industrial music ([the title track](#) sounds like Kraftwerk mixed with Nine Inch Nails), plucky country, trip-hop, and one very pretty lullaby sung in Cree, the language of her people. The opening track is a [reinterpretation](#) of one of the first songs she ever recorded, “[It’s My Way](#),” a brash statement of independence from a then-20-something girl, here updated with the electronic sheen of a remix, and sounding more like a cocky statement of fact: Buffy, now 74, did it her way. End of story.

Sainte-Marie was orphaned, spent her adolescence in Massachusetts, and was reunited with her Cree family in Saskatchewan, Canada, as a young adult. She’s since become the closest thing this country has to a mainstream celebrity ambassador of Native American culture. She has sung about Native American rights (especially in “[Now That the](#)

[Buffalo's Gone](#),” a song about cultural genocide on her first album) and been an educator and activist around issues of poverty, environmentalism, and, perhaps most famously, peace. Her 1964 ballad “[Universal Soldier](#)” was a rallying cry for the antiwar movement. Politics, though, aren’t her whole story, either: she’s just as well-regarded for open-faced, sweet songs about relationships. Her 1982 theme, “[Up Where We Belong](#),” from the movie *An Officer and a Gentleman*, won her an Academy Award for Best Original Song, and her more radio-ready love songs have been covered by **Barbra Streisand** and Elvis Presley.

She’s also a musical experimentalist. Her 1969 album *Illuminations*, derided at the time for straying from the folk sound with which she was associated, is now recognized as a key moment in the history of electronic music. She was one of the first big artists to work with newly available electronic synthesizers and to apply wild effects to her voice. *Illuminations* is truly strange—sci-fi in sound, mystical in theme, weird and charming throughout—and if there is a blueprint to a Buffy album, it might be found in this unexpected work. Sainte-Marie, wearing feathers in her hair, spoke with Vogue.com from the garden of a Chelsea hotel in New York City about her new album and a lifetime of freedom.

From “Universal Soldier” in the sixties to the protest tracks on this record, has your songwriting approach changed over the years?

Not really. I believe in songs that address things in ways that are brief, engaging, and on the level of charm. I don’t want to give people a message in an enigma, I don’t want to hurt them, I don’t want to embarrass them, I don’t want to scold them. But I am trying to lay out information that they might not know about it and I try to do it an engaging way. I still get a real thrill out of that.

People call you a “folk singer” but this album is so diverse—there’s industrial, folk, electronic, country, Cree sounds—which feels like a pretty accurate representation of just how varied your career has been.

It’s just kind of the way things have always happened. Each one of my records is really, really diverse. It works better now than it would have even a few years ago because of the Internet. And that’s a similarity that the sixties has with right now. There were student movements, a lot of dissatisfaction and people weren’t sure which way to go. And there were coffee houses, which meant that young people had a place to gather as opposed to places with liquor licenses. And everybody was sharing each other’s point of views and music styles. You’d hear flamenco next to Delta blues next to some 500 year old song from England or Scotland next to contemporary songwriters, and no one worried about it. And now with the Internet, people can find each other’s music and self-publish.

You feel right at home with the Internet.

It’s a dream come true for me. I had one of the first web sites, in the eighties. I got into computers via electronic music in the sixties. I made an album called *Illuminations*, and folk music people all held their noses, but electronic students and art students loved it.

Let's talk about *Illuminations*. In recent years, you've become recognized as a pioneer of electronic music, especially because of *Illuminations*, which was very different than your folk records and was early in its use of synths and vocal effects. Yeah, and I saw online somewhere that I didn't like it, but I've always liked it. In some senses it did define my career, but even on my very first record I was experimental. I sang a song in Hindi, I was an Eastern Philosophy major, I played mouth bow, so I had a lot of things that were unique to me. Each album has been about uniqueness. From the beginning, I never thought I would last, I thought every album would be my last. But by the time I got to *Illuminations*, I just wanted to do something different, and using a Buchla synth, just doing my songs in a new way without regard at all to radio play—which we didn't get any of [*laughs*]*—that was kind of typical to me. I'm curious and interested in sound.*

How did your interest in different instruments develop?

As a little kid when I was three, I discovered a piano and I found out it made noise and I was fascinated and taught myself how to do what I wanted to do on it. I could play fake Beethoven, and do other things with strange chords that other people didn't use but that I liked. I banged on pots and pans, I'd play with rubber bands, I'd blow on grass, I played the mouth bow. I saw a Buchla and Matrix and ARP synth early in the sixties, as soon as they came out, and I was just interested. Later, I was using a Synclavier and a Fairlight, which were the earliest standing music computers.

You're also known for being one of the first artists to use a personal computer for your work in the eighties.

I got my Macintosh in 1984, the week before they came out—I had a connection—and all of a sudden I could do my writing, and artwork, and my music on the same little machine. I could put a floppy disk in my purse and go to Toronto and continue with my art anywhere. It became my favorite tool.

On this album, you revisit “It’s My Way,” a song you wrote when you were 22 or 23. It’s a bold declaration of independence from someone so young. What did the song mean to you when you wrote it and what does it mean to you now?

I don't think I've changed much. It was the title song of my very first record in 1964, and I was named *Billboard's* “Best New Artist” the year the Beatles came to America. And the song is the same now as it was then: It's trying to inspire uniqueness in the audience. I had huge fans who were showing up walking like me, and talking like me, and dressing like me, but I was trying to inspire uniqueness.

You addressed controversial themes like war and incest, with a pretty strident bent, in your very first songs. Where did you get the chutzpah so young?

I just didn't know any better. I never thought I would last, I thought every record would be my last album, I wasn't a careerist. I wasn't planning on having a career.

One of my favorite songs on the album is “[Farm In the Middle of Nowhere](#),” which is a little country ditty and reminded me of your song “[I’m Going to Be a Country Girl Again](#).” It shows off your lighter side. Where did you write it?

On my farm in Hawaii. I live on a farm with 27 goats, a kitty cat, a horse, more chickens than I can count, and a whole lot of wild pigs. I just found that little song on my guitar and it's one of the ones that you don't even have to work on.

There's a song on the record called "[Ke Sakihitin Awasis](#)," which means "I love you baby" in Cree. What is that song about?

It's a lullaby I wrote for my own son, and I was writing it for his daddy who was really traditional. I'm singing it as a lullaby for our culture. It's meant as a love song for our culture. I've written songs like "Universal Soldier," songs of meaning, kind of like a journalist, and then there's other songs that just come as inspiration, like poetry, like this. I'm very lucky as a songwriter—I write two kinds of ways, and one is just purely inspiration.

There are still not a lot of mainstream public figures who showcase Native American or indigenous cultures.

Hardly any.

But you always have. You grew up in Massachusetts but were reunited with your Cree family in Canada when you were a teenager. How did experiencing both cultures as a young woman shape your creativity?

I was raised in a working class family, but being re-connected with my Cree family, I came to understand what real poverty is about. When you're from a working class family, you can feel sorry for yourself that you don't have more. But when you're among people who are living in real poverty, you see things a little bit differently. You see the world differently, and you see those people differently too. Cree culture in the sixties, sitting around the drum with my uncle, they never chased me away. And yet here we are in New York City and it's kind of dog-eat-dog and it's very competitive, and that's a very different world. I've always tried to use the privilege of having two cultures as a bridge, one to the other. There's never been a place where interested people can go and find out about most indigenous cultures in the world. Even if I'm doing fancy concerts in Paris or London, people are interested and want to know.

You were early to address a lot of the political issues—environment, war, civil rights—that became the big issues of the sixties.

I had the privilege of show-business airplane tickets. I was jumping all over the world. I was seeing indigenous people and city people globally, years before many of my peers. I was ahead of my time. I saw that there were indigenous people all over the world suffering from exactly the same kind of colonialism that has been oppressing native people everywhere since the 1500s. And I think that makes the difference.

How did your life in activism begin?

When I was maybe 24, I was a young singer with too much money, I knew I'd be able to have two meals a day for the rest of my life, so I took my leftover singing money and I started a scholarship called the Nihewan Foundation for American Indian Education. I really set out to address the problem I saw in Indian country where Indian kids would graduate from high school, want to go to college, but didn't know how to negotiate the

path to college. They didn't know how to get a scholarship, they weren't connected by family and friends. I have an Academy Award, but that's not my biggest honor. My biggest honor was to find out that two of my early scholarship recipients had gone on to found tribal colleges. Can you imagine that kind of thrill?

Do you spend a lot of time in Saskatchewan on the reservation?

I have a lot of family who live in the closest city, Regina, and on the reservation. We're close as a family, but people have a hard time. There are suicides, health issues, it's definitely uphill. It's quite rural, we have a few paved roads. My brother and nephews are on the tribal council, and help try to make things better. The poverty is just terrible in the city. There's an old song called "Generation" on the album. I wrote it when my dad and I were wandering around Regina when they were trying to put the guy on the moon. And I'll never forget, my dad told me, "Daughter, they ought to leave that moon alone."

Meanwhile, I was just trying to get to the Rosebud Sioux reservation for the Sun Dance. People still do keep our traditions, we have both pow wows to which everybody is invited and a lot of more private, sacred things that go on that the public won't ever know about.

What do you remember about the Greenwich Village scene?

I was living on Perry Street, in a fifth-floor walkup. I used to sit on the fire escape and write songs. And then I'd pack up my little guitar in a cardboard suitcase and I'd come downstairs in my hot dress and high heels and I'd walk through Greenwich Village. And it was all students. Students ruled. We had discovered our brains. Everybody and their sister had a guitar. Everybody knew that you didn't know you had to go to college to write a song. But, as I said, it reminds me of social media and the Internet now. There's a sense of self-publishing, and I think it's very powerful. People were blogging on stage through their guitars. Talk, talk, talk, listen, listen, listen is a way of life.

A critic at NPR used the word "elder" to describe you. Do you feel like one?

It's a very flattering word. In a Native sense, it's a great compliment. It doesn't mean just that you're old, but it implies a kind of wisdom. All my life I've been happy if somebody mentioned that to me. People used to say, You're only 22, how did you get to be so wise? And now they say, You're 74, how come you got so much energy? For me, it all comes together. I'm a teetotaler, and I still feel I have as much energy as I've ever had. I do ballet, I dance flamenco, I tour. And I'm very much flattered by that word.

Do you feel that you are a better musician now than you were?

I do. I sing better, I still write my heart, reach people at the level at which I like to address them. Whether you're at the beginning of your career or have had a long career, it's very heartening to know that you really do reach some people.

Direct Link: <http://www.vogue.com/13263267/buffy-sainte-marie-power-in-the-blood/>

Red Ride Tour gives aboriginal artists their due

Aboriginal musicians performing classical, rock, blues, grunge and hip hop genres cross North America on the Red Ride.



“Aboriginal music is a blueprint for rock ’n’ roll,” says Derek Miller, who plays the Monarch Tavern Thursday as part of the Red Ride Tour.

By: [Trish Crawford](#) Music, Published on Thu May 28 2015

The “fingerprints” of aboriginal artists are all over rock ’n’ roll music, says rock blues guitarist [Derek Miller](#).

The singer/songwriter from Six Nations of the Grand River has just completed a new CD, *Rumble: A Tribute to Native Music Icons*, which was produced by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It covers the vast body of work of aboriginal musicians from Jimi Hendrix (part Cherokee), to Robbie Robertson (half Mohawk) of the Band, and Link Wray (half Shawnee), credited with inventing the power chord.

Miller is part of the [Red Ride Tour](#) travelling North America this summer, stopping Thursday at the Monarch Tavern, where he will perform many of the works on *Rumble*.

The album grew from the Smithsonian’s native music museum project *Up Where We Belong* (the title of the classic song by Canadian Buffy Sainte-Marie, who is Cree).

“Aboriginal music is a blueprint for rock ’n’ roll,” says Miller. “The indigenous slant is on every transition in popular music.” And lack of recognition for native musicians must be addressed, he adds.

For instance, blues artist Charley Patton, whose heritage was black, white and Cherokee, is considered the creator of Delta blues.

“We need to talk more about it and get it out,” Miller says.

Up and Comers

Three performers on the Red Ride Tour who you can catch Thursday at Toronto's Monarch Tavern:

Kristi Lane Sinclair is a Haida/Cree singer-songwriter who founded the all-native tour five years ago. The Vancouver-based grunge performer is promoting her new album, *Dark Matter*. She describes her songs as “the beautiful and the heavy,” and a change from the songs about love and breakups in her earlier work.

Cris Derksen is a classically trained half-Cree cellist on the tour's Winnipeg to Montreal stretch. She has performed with the Vancouver Opera and Tanya Tagaq. She describes her music as “my own genre”: hip hop, aboriginal, electronic and classical cello. Her new composition *Orchestral Powwow*, a combination of chamber and traditional music, is being performed Aug. 7 at Harbourfront.

Christa Couture is a Cree/Métis folksinger who describes herself “as a girl with a guitar.” Now living in Toronto, she is finishing a new album to be released in 2016. Her music combines contemporary and traditional native music, which she says is getting more attention, possibly brought about by the tour. “Change is happening.”

Established Stars

The up and comers join a growing corps of established aboriginal musicians, including:

Buffy Sainte-Marie, the Canadian/American Cree hit maker known for songs such as “Universal Soldier,” has just released a new album, *Power in the Blood*. The folksinger, songwriter and educator recently was named an honorary fellow of the Royal Conservatory, its highest honour, and has an Oscar for her 1982 song “Up Where We Belong” from *An Officer and a Gentleman*.

Tanya Tagaq's throat singing has garnered her international acclaim and brought attention to ancient Inuit traditions she utilizes in her music. She has won the Polaris Music Prize and the Juno Award for Aboriginal Album of the Year. She will appear in a nonsinging role in the Luminato Festival's production of R. Murray Schafer's *Apocalypse* at the Sony Centre.

A Tribe Called Red, currently made up DJ NDN, Bear Witness and Zoolman, mixes traditional pow wow vocals and drumming with cutting-edge electronic music. The Ottawa group's 2012 album, *A Tribe Called Red*, was longlisted for the Polaris Music Prize.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/stage/2015/05/28/red-ride-tour-gives-aboriginal-artists-their-due.html>

Music was an 'outlet' for Inuit 'throat boxer' during turbulent childhood



Inuit throat boxer Nelson Tagoona performs on stages across Canada's North and in classrooms, where he encourages youth to find their voice and believe in themselves. (photo courtesy Marcel Mason)

[Karolyn Coorsh](#), CTVNews.ca

Published Wednesday, May 27, 2015 6:30AM EDT

At age 7, Nelson Tagoona took up playing the guitar. At 15, he was composing his own songs.

Today, at 21, the Inuit throat boxer's life is firmly rooted in music. He has a powerful message for today's youth about finding their voice, and he delivers it through his high-energy performances.

Growing up in an isolated community, Tagoona struggled with bullying and mental health issues. He found his own voice by combining beatboxing – a vocal style that simulates percussion sounds -- with throat singing. A form of musical performance that is unique to Inuit culture, throat singing requires the performer to control air through inhalation and exhalation to create a rhythm, chant or melody.

Though he wasn't the first to coin the term, Tagoona has helped pioneer the hybrid musical genre.

With 300 performances under his belt to date, Tagoona's compositions have been heard in front of live audiences at concerts and in classrooms across Canada's North. In YouTube videos of his shows, Tagoona's energy is boundless, as he encourages his rapt audience to sing along.

“In a lot of my songs I’ve always talked a lot about believing in yourself, being courageous and not being afraid and having a lot of heart,” he tells CTVNews.ca in an telephone interview from Nunavut. “No matter how dark your days have been, you’ll see that shining light once again.”

As a child growing up in Nunavut’s Baker Lake, music was an “outlet,” Tagoona says, a place to run away from life. “And then it turned into my life.”

Tagoona lost his father and many of his friends to suicide. He also struggled with bullying, depression and a constant feeling of alienation. The theme of loss permeates his music, but in front of a classroom of students, Tagoona’s overall message is clear and personal: Believe in yourself and fight for your happiness, he tells them.

“There are things that really break you down in life and that’s the fuel to my music,” Tagoona says. “When I’m composing my music, I’m in tears, and I’m really shaking and I’m nervous ... scared even.

“But by the time I’m done the piece, I can really see how it went from negative, dark ... to being full of life, full of courage, full of positivity.”

Tagoona said music helps him move on from the past.

“Instead of looking back at all that has happened, I’m looking ahead at what we can change,” he says. Fans relate to Tagoona, and take his music to heart. Often times after a show, audience members come up to walk around with him and chat about difficult topics.

“Some of the fans I’ve met lost both parents to suicide,” he says.

Tagoona says he engages with youth in aboriginal communities because he understands where they’re coming from. He’s been there himself.

“In Nunavut, a lot of these towns don’t have much,” he says. “Youth who live in a remote community have a different perspective on life than those in the cities because it’s a completely different lifestyle.”

But Tagoona also says that city-dwellers can learn a lot from that lifestyle, which among other things, involves hunting and fishing.

“Coming back from the land, you are super grateful for what you have, even if it’s an empty house,” he says. “I feel like everyone on the planet should experience this at least one time so they could understand that society today is actually pretty spoiled.

“A lot of people have it made, but they’re ungrateful.”

Tagoona is proud of his role model status with youth, and takes it seriously.

As a member of the National Centre for the Arts' Music Alive program, Tagoona is frequently invited to perform at public events and for youth. The Music Alive program sends teaching musicians to work with children and youth in northern communities, including Iqaluit, Igloolik, Rankin Inlet, Pangnirtung and Kugluktuk.

Tagoona also works with Blueprint for Life, a non-profit organization that conducts hip-hop workshops with vulnerable youth to help boost self-esteem and tackle issues like violence, domestic abuse, sexual assault and suicide.

Next up for Tagoona are shows in Ottawa, Toronto and his hometown of Baker Lake.

Tagoona has yet to cut an album or obtain a manager, but all in due time, he says. He's a perfectionist when it comes to his music, and isn't afraid to wait until the time is right.

"I throw myself out there as far as I can, and I'm not afraid of where I'm going to land."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/entertainment/music-was-an-outlet-for-inuit-throat-boxer-during-turbulent-childhood-1.2392318>

Aboriginal Community Development

B.C. First Nations leaders' new book calls for native self-determination

Former leaders say self-determination will help indigenous people become self-sufficient

By Radio West, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 21, 2015 4:30 PM PT Last Updated: May 21, 2015 4:41 PM PT



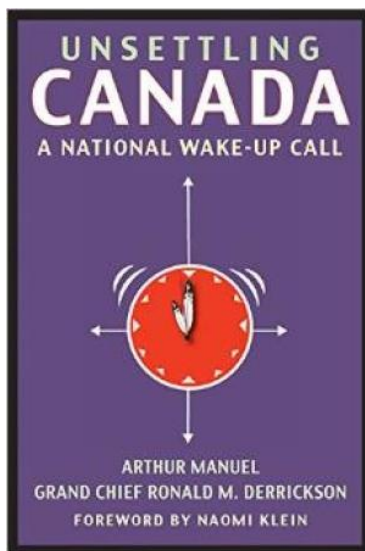
Former B.C. Chief Arthur Manuel, pictured here, and Grand Chief Ron Derrickson have just released a book, *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call*, outlining the challenges indigenous people face. (Idlenomore.ca)

Two B.C. First Nations leaders have just written a book that outlines the challenges Indigenous people face and offers solutions that they believe could benefit their people and the rest of the country.

It's called *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call*.

"I think it is important for not only Indigenous people, but Canadians to understand the struggle," said author Arthur Manuel, who is also the former chief of the Neskonlith Indian Band.

"When you add up all the Indian reserves in Canada, the land we got is 0.2 per cent and we are expected to make a living off of that. The rest of the land 99.8 per cent is under federal, provincial jurisdiction and that's one of the reasons why indigenous communities are mostly poor."



A new book written by two former B.C. Chiefs details the struggles indigenous people have faced in Canada and offers solutions on how the federal and provincial government can improve the situation. (Between the Lines)

"Communities are impoverished and you have to go hat in hand and get money from the Department of Indian Affairs [whose] job is to mainly manage poverty on Indian reserves."

Manuel believes the answer is self-determination.

"The big answer of self determination is to deal with this 0.2 per cent land base that we have, to increase it so indigenous people can be more self sufficient...in their own territory.

"The land question is what we are dealing with here in B.C. That's what the whole B.C. treaty process is supposed to solve. People were negotiating under the federal claims policy over the last 20 years and it's cost over a billion dollars and only a handful of agreements were made."

Manuel says critics who believe First Nations communities are not ready for this type of change are misguided.

"The capacity and status of the people themselves cannot be used as an excuse not to allow people to engage in self-determination because a lot of times just moving ahead and determining your own destiny over land and resources that are assigned to you is the only way you are ever going to learn to do it."

"The land is big enough to sustain both indigenous people and settlers. There's no reason why the 200,000 indigenous people in B.C. should be totally impoverished, generation, after generation after generation when the land is that large."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/b-c-first-nations-leaders-new-book-calls-for-native-self-determination-1.3082783>

Church of the First Peoples wins fight to keep Father Jim

By Brent Wittmeier, Edmonton Journal May 22, 2015



Father Jim Holland stands in front of Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton on Wednesday, July 11, 2012.

EDMONTON - Following a strong public outcry, the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples won't have to part with "Father Jim" after all.

Rev. James Holland has pastored the downtown Edmonton Catholic church for the past two decades. Late last month, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Holland's order, announced the 72-year-old would be moved at the end of September to make way for three new priests.

Things came to a head late last week, Holland said, when after a large public backlash, Oblate officials met with a small group of community leaders.

"They were ready to go on a march in front of the church and then in front of the Oblate houses," said Holland, who didn't attend the meeting. "They were quite serious, they were not about to give up."

The next day, the Oblates told Holland they were reversing their decision. A letter of apology to the community was read out during Sunday morning mass. The atmosphere was joyous, said parishioner Marlene Poitras.

"The energy was so vibrant. Everybody was dancing and singing, really happy," said Poitras, who started an online petition to keep Father Jim.

The petition was at 2,664 signatures and still climbing when Poitras shut it down on Tuesday. Two other petitions circulated in the community, she said, and many people had spoken to Oblate officials, asking them to reconsider. Because of the successful petition, Poitras found out this week she'll be recognized at the Alberta Role Models of Alberta Awards in the fall.

"There's a lot of pride, because we fought for something and were able to finally achieve success," Poitras said. "For so long, our people have been not consulted with on major issues, so we stood up and fought back."

In 1990, the Oblates decided to repurpose their inner city parish for outreach to the city's inner-city aboriginal population, many of whom have connections to the Roman Catholic church and Oblate-founded missions throughout the northern parts of the province. In 1993, the Archdiocese declared Sacred Heart the official congregation for Edmonton's Catholic First Nations and Métis people, though many non-aboriginals attend as well.

The American-born Holland came aboard in 1995, ordained after a career in accounting. Sacred Heart is the only parish he's led, and while he's not aboriginal, he's created a bond with the community. He says the fight to keep him shows that the Sacred Heart community is vibrant and capable of speaking for itself.

After he was told he'd have to leave, he suggested he'd like to stay on to help new pastors transition into the position. For now, all succession plans have been put on hold, and the Oblates have said that they will consult the parish before considering bringing in any other pastors.

Holland jokes that he's "not sane altogether," but says he's in such good health, he doesn't need any medication.

He knows he can't stay forever. One of the reasons the Oblates had pushed for the change was that they weren't sure they'd have new priests available in three or four years, Holland said. But the church is willing to figure that out when they have to.

Poitras is surprised at how far the news travelled. She's had responses from all over western and northern Canada.

"I didn't realize what a big thing it was, but it's huge," Poitras said. "It truly shows that Sacred Heart is a world-renown church."

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Church+First+Peoples+wins+fight+keep+Father/11076054/story.html>

Yukon First Nations trained in log building preservation

Workshop at Fort Selkirk will teach skills and techniques to preserve historic sites

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 25, 2015 6:00 PM CT Last Updated: May 25, 2015 6:00 PM CT



Restoration work at Yukon's historic Fort Selkirk, in 1985. (Government of Yukon)

The Yukon government has invited representatives from the territory's First Nations to Fort Selkirk this week to learn how to preserve historic buildings.

The focus is on log structures: The old cabins, churches and trading posts scattered across the territory. Some have been designated as historic sites while many more have quietly fallen into disrepair and decay.

"We have lots of work to do on these sites," says Bruce Barrett who works with the Yukon government's historic sites unit.



"They are biodegradable structures if there ever was such a thing," says Bruce Barrett, historic sites project manager with the Government of Yukon. (CBC)

"It's a challenge for a jurisdiction as small as ours to try to manage and preserve such far-flung and extensive historic resources."

Barrett says the goal is to teach First Nations' employees skills to look after historic sites that lie within settlement lands as well as sites that are jointly managed with the Yukon government. These include Fort Selkirk and Rampart House near Old Crow.

Derek Cooke is a heritage technician with the Ta'an Kwach'an Council. The First Nation is sending three people to this week's workshop.

"It's always important to develop the capacity for doing it, because people do need certain skills," he says.

Cooke says Ta'an Kwach'an hopes the training will foster a deeper appreciation of the First Nation's heritage resources.

"We do have on our traditional territory quite a number of extant built heritage sites, particularly in the Lake Laberge area," he says. "I think it's important for people to know the need to preserve a lot of those."

Cooke says the First Nation has already started work at the old Ta'an village site on Lake Laberge. This includes the restoration of legendary riverboat captain Frank Slim's cabin.



Historic Fort Selkirk, Yukon (Government of Yukon)

Barrett believes Yukon is doing a fairly good job at managing its major historic sites, but he admits there's only so much that can be preserved.

"There were many hundreds of log structures thrown up fairly hastily all over the Yukon territory," he says. "And they are biodegradable structures if there ever was such a thing."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-first-nations-trained-in-log-building-preservation-1.3087006>

Alberta wildfires force thousands to flee northern First Nations

[National News](#) | May 26, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#) | [0 Comments](#)



Brandi Morin

APTN National News

Dozens of out of control wildfires have forced the mandatory evacuation of more than 3,000 people from their homes in northern Alberta.

The Bigstone Cree Nation (BCN) located near Lake Wabasca 320 kilometres north of Edmonton stated in a release Tuesday that the fire was started by a burning vehicle last Saturday on the reserve transfer site.

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development ordered the evacuation of the BCN and Wabasca starting last Sunday.

The Municipal District of Opportunity established reception centers for all evacuees in the Hamlet of Calling Lake and the County of Athabasca.

“The MD and Bigstone Cree Nation are very grateful for offers of assistance from the public and outside agencies,” read the statement.

“At this time, the evacuees are supplied with necessities and the Wabasca and BCN Fire Department are well supplied with equipment and manpower. Provincial agencies and an animal welfare agency are also on scene.”

The RCMP has approximately 50 members on scene to secure the community.

BCN resident Nicole Auger fled the community with four members of her family, including her sister who is pregnant and her aunt who has liver and kidney issues.

At the time they left, the Red Cross was not yet set up in nearby evacuation sites to accommodate their needs.

The BCN sent them to stay at a hotel in Edmonton.

“It’s all very tiring and surreal,” she said of suddenly packing up and leaving home.

Augers father stayed behind, and told her over the phone that the smoke in Wabasca is not very prevalent yet.

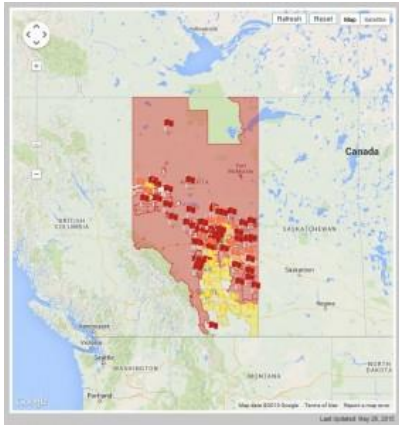
“He’s kind of being stubborn and won’t leave. But he said you can’t see the fire. ” she said.

According to the release from the province of Alberta, a total of 3,750 Wabasca hamlet and reserve residents are registered as evacuees.

Last night 630 people were housed in reception centres in Calling Lake and Athabasca and another 400 people are either camping in Calling Lake or staying with family and

friends there. Approximately 100 people with special needs are being lodged in hotels as far away as Westlock.

On Tuesday the Friendship Centre in Slave Lake, home to the 2011 tragic fires that wiped out over a 1/3 of the town, opened its doors to evacuees.



Alberta Government wildfire information officer, Geoffery Driscoll said that wildfires are a natural part of Alberta's landscape and something that happens all the time.

On average the province sees about 1,500 wildfires a year and the north is no stranger to them.

The main cause of wildfires are from lightning and overly dry conditions.

"We can't do much about the fires that we're going to have to fight, there's no choice there," said Driscoll.

However, it's the human caused fires that could be prevented that end up causing an extra burden for firefighters.

On Monday the government enacted a province wide open-fire ban. This type of ban was last implemented in 2011 during the disastrous Slave Lake fire.

About 40 fighters as well as helicopters, air tankers and heavy equipment are working around the clock to contain the fire near Wabasca.

"The fire that's near Wabasca and the Bigstone Cree Nation hasn't grown much in the past day thanks in part to the work of firefighters in that area. They've been able to get in front of it and put a fire guard around most of that fire. It's still considered out of control, but we're going to see what happens in the warmth of the day and see if the firefighters can continue to contain that fire," said Driscoll.

There are currently about 60 fires burning across Alberta, 50 of which were started just last night by lightning, 19 of them are listed as out of control.

Today the Alberta government's provincial operations center in Edmonton opened in response to the out of control wildfires.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/05/26/alberta-wildfires-force-thousands-to-flee-northern-first-nations/>

Métis Heritage Hall in Churchill destroyed by fire

Posted: 05/26/2015 3:36 PM | [Comments:](#)

Myrtle deMeulles displays samples of her caribou hair sculpting artwork at the hall.

A collection of Métis artifacts was destroyed when the Métis Heritage Hall in Churchill, Man. burned down early Tuesday morning.

"It's a real shame," said town resident and gas bar employee Joe Stover.

Early this morning he saw the burned building and felt sad for the loss of artifacts acquired for it by Myrtle de Meulles, a local Métis historian and story teller. "The walls were all full of Métis artifacts and memorabilia," Stover said.

The single-story hall was used for Cree language classes, public events and was especially busy during polar bear season. It was used for cultural and tourist presentations, where de Meulles told stories. She could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

No injuries were reported and the cause of the fire is under investigation.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Metis-Heritage-Hall-in-Churchill-destroyed-by-fire-305066651.html>

First Nations \$300M federal housing fund builds just 99 homes

Harper government touted program as market-based solution to housing woes on reserves

By Dean Beeby, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 27, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: May 27, 2015 7:45 AM ET

A \$300-million aboriginal housing fund created by the Conservative government is falling far short of its promise of creating thousands of new homes on reserves that desperately need dwellings.

A CBC News investigation has found the First Nations Market Housing Fund helped build just 99 homes to date and is nowhere near meeting its ambitious target of 25,000 privately owned dwellings by 2018.

"Frankly, it's taken us a little longer than anticipated," says John Beaucage, chair of the fund's board of trustees. "We're not going to hit that target."



A dwelling in the First Nations community of Pikangikum in northwestern Ontario shows the need for better housing. The \$300-million fund meant to alleviate housing shortages on First Nations across Canada has built only 99 homes. (Coleen Rajotte/CBC)

The fund was created with fanfare by the Harper government in 2008 as a bold new way to help solve the severe housing crisis on First Nations reserves, where populations are booming. The money would be used to backstop bank mortgage loans, allowing eligible applicants to build and own their own dwellings — and someday sell their houses in a thriving housing market.

In the last eight years, the fund has grown to \$344 million through non-housing investments, with administrative expenses, including stipends and travel, now costing about \$3.6 million a year. But the take-up for actual fund-backed mortgages has been dismally low.

Ken Coates, a professor of public policy at the University of Saskatchewan, says the delays are no surprise, because housing on reserves has long been seen as a treaty right and the responsibility of the federal government, while market-based housing is a new concept that arouses skepticism among some First Nations.

Change of mindset

"For some people, that's not the logical extension of government commitments," he said in an interview. "The fund misunderstood that this was a fundamental change of mindset."



Public policy professor Ken Coates says bringing market-based housing to Canada's First Nations will take years, because mindsets have to change. (Ken Coates)

Beaucage agrees. "The idea of market has not been there before in the majority of communities across Canada," he said. "There has been some resistance.... We have to be a little patient because it's extremely new."

Many First Nations reserves are remote, rather than near urban centres where housing markets already function, so homeowners on reserves have few assurances they could recoup their investment when it's time to sell.

Mortgages also require a credit history and a steady income, neither of which may be available to residents of reserves, some of whom already pay little or nothing for their existing subsidized housing provided by the band council.

'Things are going to get better.'— John Beaucage, chair of board of trustees, First Nations Market Housing Fund

Coates says it will require much more time and work to get individuals and then band councils to buy into the market housing concept — a "double jump," as he calls it — and even then, it will be only one tool among several to get houses built.

"I never like it when governments announce big pots of money for anything," Coates says. "We rarely make the targets."

A 2012 evaluation by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, recently made public, raised the question of whether the fund is needed at all.

Should be stopped, evaluation says

"There is no definitive evidence that there is a need for a fund explicitly designed for this form of credit enhancement, and no evidence that this fund in particular will meet its stated objectives of increasing home ownership and reducing reliance on federal assistance for social housing," it found.

A housing specialist in Saskatchewan with the Prince Albert Grand Council says the fund was created without proper First Nations consultation, in a typically paternalistic way.

"I think the program should be stopped," Frank Bighead said in an interview. "Nobody consulted with us."



John Beaucage, chair of the board of trustees for the First Nations Market Housing Fund, says initial targets were unrealistic but the program is gaining momentum. (THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wyld)

He said \$300 million could be spent on housing in more effective ways, and called for a national roundtable to come up with a better plan.

Beaucage acknowledges the fund's initial plans were a "little naive," but says the fund is "starting to gain momentum.... Things are going to get better."

He cites the \$5.4 million spent last year on so-called "capacity development," helping to educate First Nations in planning, governance and finance for new market-based housing. That requires much travel across the country, paving the way for perhaps 10,000 to 15,000 homes he says can still be built by 2018, the fund's 10th anniversary.

The fund provides a 10 per cent backstop for housing loans guaranteed by a First Nation, which can then negotiate lower interest rates and other breaks with lenders.

The fund's board of trustees is appointed by the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp., Pierre Poilievre, and by Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt. CMHC manages the day-to-day activities.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/first-nations-300m-federal-housing-fund-builds-just-99-homes-1.3086954>

Harper government defends First Nations housing fund, despite poor results

Opposition assails program that has built just 99 homes out of a planned 25,000

By Dean Beeby, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 27, 2015 4:55 PM ET Last Updated: May 27, 2015 4:55 PM ET

The Harper government defended the overall goal of its \$300-million First Nations housing fund today, but was silent on the program's weak performance so far — just 99 homes built on reserves after six years.

The First Nations Market Housing Fund was supposed to deliver 25,000 privately owned homes by 2018, but fund officials now say they won't even come close to that ambitious target even as populations on reserves boom.

"We want to see First Nations individuals to be able to have the pride, the security and the financial stability that comes with owning their own home," said Candice Bergen, minister of state for social development.

"Of course, we always review programs to ensure that they meet the goals required, but we think it's important that First Nations individuals can own their own home on reserve. That's why we created this fund."

'Failed miserably'

Bergen was speaking in the House of Commons, where New Democrat MP Romeo Saganash called the fund "another ineffective program that has only funded another bureaucracy." Liberal MP Carolyn Bennett said the government "has failed miserably" to alleviate a huge housing crisis on reserves.

A CBC News investigation found that the fund has grown through investments to be worth about \$344 million since it was created in 2008 and currently spends about \$4 million annually for administration.

John Beaucage, chair of the fund's board of trustees, acknowledges progress has been slow, but says the program is gaining momentum.

Critics say creating private ownership of homes on remote reserves can be difficult, as First Nations members often lack a credit history and steady income, and there is no thriving local housing market to sell into if owners want to move.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/harper-government-defends-first-nations-housing-fund-despite-poor-results-1.3089999>

Buffy Sainte-Marie's Ingenious Plan To Help Our First Nations Housing Crisis

The Huffington Post Canada | By [Joshua Ostroff](#)

Posted: 05/27/2015 1:19 pm EDT Updated: 05/27/2015 5:59 pm EDT



This article is part of [What's Working](#), a global HuffPost editorial initiative to go beyond "If it bleeds, it leads" and double-down on our coverage of people coming up with solutions to the very real challenges we face.

Cree singer-songwriter and activist Buffy Sainte-Marie has been an indigenous leader for more than 50 years, ever since she brought First Nations issues to the fore with songs like "My Country 'Tis Of Thy People You're Dying" and during her years on "Sesame Street" in the 1970s.

Now the 74-year-old is back with a new album, "Power in the Blood," which offers up more of the political lyricism that made her famous. But Sainte-Marie's aboriginal activism extends beyond her music, too.

The Saskatchewan-born star has devised a clever and creative plan to use traditional knowledge and cutting-edge technology to help address the housing crisis so many First Nations face.

"I just got to thinking, how come our indigenous people were living here 15,000 years ago on, and they weren't having the problems that modern people have living in these government homes made of planks?

"So I came up with this concept of Green Indians," she tells HuffPost Canada.

The idea was born out a heartbroken conversation on a tour van between concert stops. Sainte-Marie was talking to her bass player, a "hunter and subsistence living kinda guy" who was from a northern Manitoba reserve. He told her about a young mother with a couple of kids who couldn't stay in her dysfunctional home and had fled to some burned-out hut.

The woman was sadly symbolic of a housing crisis that has seen too many First Nations people "living desperate lives in inadequate, crowded, high-maintenance homes. And sometimes in shacks."

A 2014 government report on Manitoba — the province with some of [the poorest outcomes](#) for First Nations in Canada — revealed almost one-third of aboriginal people live in reserve homes [in need of "major" repair](#). On some reserves, as many as 18 people [share a three-bedroom home](#).

Sainte-Marie wants to help find a solution.

"The idea would be to have a corps of people — like Idle No More kind of people who just plain care — go to reserves and teach them how to make subsistence houses out of modern materials," she says.

That way, "if you have to get out of the house, you can do it."

She began researching the traditional tipis of Saskatchewan and Alberta and the wigwams of Manitoba and Ontario that provided shelter for thousands of years before colonization. They were structures that protected people in temperatures that fell as far as -50 in winter while soaring in the summer.

These homes used buffalo hides, tree bark, heated rocks, and could be relocated relatively easily when needed.

"[The] clever methods of tying, lining, heating, cooling and directing air kept families cozy in the cold and comfortable in summer," Sainte-Marie said.

Sainte-Marie has always used the past as inspiration rather than being tethered to it. As a musician, she was a pioneer of using computer technology to make music, despite her hippie-folk pedigree.

So she wants to re-imagine these traditional structures and has been in talks with a couple universities about how to take advantage of old techniques for construction, ventilation and heating but with new building materials. ("I work with NASA sometimes on indigenous science things," she mentions offhandedly.)

Sainte-Marie is currently calling for a think tank comprised of aboriginal and non-aboriginal experts in environmental studies, sustainable resources, science and cultural studies.

She wants to include Habitat for Humanity so they can "share their experiences in organizing and teaching volunteers how to construct modern homes for needy people" and bring in NASA and other groups who can discuss high-tech materials developed for space exploration in low-temperature conditions.

She wants the whole thing to be open-source, with the information distributed online as well as to schools and universities to mobilize a grassroots movement of people who can help implement the plan in aboriginal communities across the continent. The hope is to help give indigenous people their self-determination back, and even create jobs.

"It used to be that anyone could make their own home, it's not that hard. It's so crazy that none of us, aboriginal or not, we couldn't survive if the system starts to fall down. We ought to be able to make our own homes."

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/05/27/buffy-sainte-marie-first-nations-housing_n_7424652.html

Alberta First Nation evacuees return home but are warned wildfire season far from over

[National News](#) | May 28, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#) | [0 Comments](#)



(Makeshift sign on the road leading to the Bigstone Cree Nation Wednesday. Photo posted on the Bigstone Cree Evacuation facebook page)

Brandi Morin

APTN National News

BIGSTONE CREE NATION — Residents are continuing to return home after an evacuation was ordered for the northern Alberta hamlet of Wabasca and the Bigstone Cree Nation (BCN) but officials are warning people to be ready to leave again on short notice.

Dozens of wildfires are burning across Alberta and officials are issuing evacuation notices for several oil installations in northern parts of the province.

The Municipal District of Opportunity issued a local state of emergency when an out of control wildfire south of the area posed a threat to the community starting last Saturday.

Up to 5,000 people were reported to have fled the area.

Many camped out at Calling Lake just over an hour south of Wabasca.

Some took shelter at an emergency evacuation center located there and others drove further to Athabasca, Slave Lake, Westlock and Edmonton.

BCN Elder Paul Beauregard said he was impressed by how well the Red Cross organized to help people displaced at the evacuation centers.



BCN Elder Paul Beauregard back on his porch

He arrived in Athabasca in the wee hours of the morning Sunday and said his time away from home caused a lot of discomfort.

“I talked to other seniors too, many are not healthy,” said Beauregard. “Just to order people out of their homes, I think there should be more consideration given of a person’s situation.”

He arrived back at home Tuesday night and for now, he feels safe, however acknowledged potential hazards with the overly dry conditions and low water levels in local creeks and swamps.

“It is possible that we could be faced with many fires. There’s so much dead debris and dry grass in the forest and, what can a person do?”

- [Up-to-date information fire restrictions and fire bans](#) is available by calling 1-866-FYI-FIRE (1-866-394-3473).
- [To report a wildfire call 310-FIRE \(310-3473\).](#)

Hundreds of people with no means of transportation were taken from BCN by the bus load and taken to evacuation centers.

Today the buses lined the outside of the Bigstone community school where hundreds of people returned with their belongings. Some only had the clothes on their backs, other families carried their belongings in garbage bags.

Carrie Cardinal was tired and ready to go home, she is one of the residents of BCN who is still on evacuation notice awaiting news on if the roads were cleared.

“They (crews) just have to pack up everything. There was sprinklers on our houses and the road’s a wreck now because all the trucks and stuff are going on and off of it so we’re just waiting,” said Cardinal.



BCN residents arrive home Wednesday

Wabasca resident Darrell McLeod said he waited until the RCMP came to his door to tell him he had to leave.

“It was an experience,” he said. “It wasn’t nice to leave home, but you gotta do what you gotta do.”

He added that the two days he was away seemed more like a week, and that he’s looking forward to getting home to make sure his dogs are alright.

The Second Hand Animal Rescue Society was in Wabasca and BCN during the crisis to water and feed animals left behind.

The latest Alberta Wildfire update states that in the last 24 hours there have been 33 new wildfires.

In total there are approximately 63 wildfires with 13 of them listed as out of control.

Since April 1, 723 fires and 29,660 hectares have been burned. The wildfire outlook in Alberta remains severe through to the end of this week.

Alberta Health Services issued a precautionary air-quality advisory for the entire north zone and Edmonton areas.



BCN residents head to a line of buses for the trip home

For the time being Wabasca and BCN residents will remain on a 30-minute evacuation notice.

A province-wide open fire ban continues to be in effect. This includes no campfires or other open fires are permitted in campgrounds or in forested areas.

The Alberta Government encourages all Albertans to follow the fire restrictions and heed to any evacuation orders in their communities.

For more information go to the Alberta government website here:

<http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=3809577A38DCA-A1C8-B88D-AFA2857BD389F65C>

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/05/28/alberta-first-nation-evacuees-return-home-but-are-warned-wildfire-season-far-from-over/>

Churchill Métis Heritage Hall to rebuild after devastating blaze

"It was a tossed salad of charred remains, it was pretty gross," says Echo Finlay

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 27, 2015 10:02 AM CT Last Updated: May 27, 2015 10:02 AM CT



"My great-aunt Myrtle de Meulles was the force behind it. She sat there with tears in her eyes just crying and watching it," Echo Finlay said Tuesday. (Facebook)

The artifacts being recovered from the charred remains of Churchill's former Métis Heritage Hall are few and far between after Tuesday's destructive blaze.



Echo Finlay told CBC News that the building was gone by 8:30 a.m. Tuesday. (Facebook)

"It's devastating," Echo Finlay, co-chair for Churchill Métis Local, said. "This is all volunteer run. We work so hard for it and my great-aunt Myrtle de Meulles was the force behind it. She sat there with tears in her eyes just crying and watching it. Our whole collection of artifacts was in there with old family pictures and beadwork examples. There's so much that's gone."

"It was a tossed salad of charred remains, it was pretty gross," Finlay said of what was left of the hall after the fire was extinguished.

Some artifacts were pulled from the rubble, if not to save the item, at least to photograph what's left of it, Finlay said.



Some artifacts were pulled from the rubble after the fire Tuesday. (Echo Finlay)

Finlay got a call about the fire at 6 a.m. Tuesday and the building was gone by 8:30 a.m., she told CBC News.

"None of us have ever had to deal with anything like this and we're just trying to get through it," Finlay said.

"As far as rebuilding, you bet ya. If there's a will there's a way — we'll be able to."



A team of people pulled what they could find from the rubble of the heritage hall on Tuesday evening. (Echo Finlay)



"It was a tossed salad of charred remains, it was pretty gross," says Churchill Métis Local's Echo Finlay. (Echo Finlay)

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/churchill-m%C3%A9tis-heritage-hall-to-rebuild-after-devastating-blaze-1.3089110>

Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement

Nunavut RCMP plan recruitment program for Inuit officers

Sergeant Merle Carpenter says RCMP last hired an Inuit officer over 8 years ago

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 22, 2015 7:44 AM CT Last Updated: May 22, 2015 8:31 AM CT



Sergeant Merle Carpenter discusses the new Inuit Cadet Development Program at RCMP V division headquarters in Iqaluit. Carpenter says that the RCMP haven't hired an Inuit officer for over 8 years. (CBC)

Nunavut RCMP are looking for more Inuit police officers, and have launched an ambitious program aimed at growing the number of Inuit in law enforcement.

Taught in Iqaluit, the Inuit Cadet Development Program is aimed at Nunavut high school graduates. The 8-month course would be taught like a boot camp, shaping students physically and mentally, while taking courses related to policing.

"The last time we hired an Inuit officer was over 8 years ago," said RCMP Sergeant Merle Carpenter, who helped create the program, which is being held jointly with the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology in British Columbia.

"The curriculum is relevant," says Aruna Gore, Nicola Valley's associate dean. "It has to be relevant to the needs of the community, or else you won't have students buy into it."

The program won't guarantee that a student becomes an RCMP officer — they still have to pass the entrance exam and do the RCMP course of study — but any credits earned while taking courses are transferrable to other institutions. Carpenter, who is originally

from Sachs Harbour, says not all graduates will go on to become RCMP officers, but the coursework will help them find work in related professions, such as court bailiffs.

Tough sell



Aruna Gore, Associate Dean of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. The Cadet Program has been developed in association with the Institute. (CBC)

Carpenter and Gore are still seeking funding for the project, and say they are getting plenty of interest from officials at multiple levels of government, and even private organizations.

"We gotta get all those partners together and make this work," says Carpenter, who is hoping the program will begin in September fo 2016, if funding falls into place.

However, drumming up interest among potential recruits has proved to be a trickier proposition. Nobody attended an information session held Thursday in Iqaluit.

Carpenter mentioned competition for employees as a potential recruitment problem, saying that many young Inuit who could have given the RCMP a try end up being enticed away by lucrative jobs in the mining industry.

For any Nunavut high school students who are interested, Carpenter says they can talk to Iqaluit Constables Henry Coman and David Aglukark. Coman and Aglukark are willing to talk to any students coming towards the end of their schooling, as well as those who might not have the necessary grades.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nunavut-rcmp-plan-recruitment-program-for-inuit-officers-1.3083306>

Top court clears Ontario, but aboriginal jury problem remains: Tim Harper

The question remains — are governments doing enough to ensure our jury participation is representative of our population?



Howard Sapers, the outgoing federal correctional investigator, revealed in a 2013 report that aboriginal women comprised approximately 32 per cent of all female federal prisoners in 2010-11 — up more than 85 per cent in 10 years, writes Tim Harper.

By: [Tim Harper](#) National Affairs, Published on Thu May 21 2015

Over-represented in our prisons. Under-represented on our juries.

No Supreme Court decision was going to change that reality for aboriginal Canadians.

But even if the court, by a 5-2 decision, ruled that the constitutional rights of [Clifford Kokopenace](#) were not violated when he was convicted of manslaughter by a jury that included no aboriginal members, the decision again raised the question as to whether governments in this country are really doing enough to get aboriginals on our jury rolls.

Kokopenace, a native, was convicted in Kenora, a district in which on-reserve residents made up 32 per cent of the population. Yet not a single aboriginal sat in judgment of him on the jury.

“A jury roll containing few individuals of the accused’s race or religion is not in itself indicative of bias,” Justice Michael Moldaver wrote for the majority.

In this case, if Ontario made a reasonable effort to compile an inclusive, representative jury roll — but a segment of the population declined to participate — it is not the province’s fault and it had addressed its constitutional obligation, the court ruled.

Government inaction is one problem. But there are other problems with the jury system in this country that touch on aboriginal rights.

Ottawa lawyer Michael A. Johnston, in a paper published last week, argues that up 10 per cent of Canadians are being unfairly barred from jury duty because they have a criminal record.

In Ontario, for example, citizens are ineligible to serve as jurors if they have been convicted of a crime prosecuted by indictment, unless they have been pardoned. Saskatchewan is the only province that does not exclude those with a criminal record from sitting on a jury.

At the federal level, the Criminal Code denies jury duty to anyone convicted of a crime for which they served more than 12 months.

As Johnston points out, a criminal record does not preclude someone from voting, seeking office, practicing law, becoming a judge, paying taxes or being conscripted into fighting in wars.

Surely the value of a juror lies in the present, not what he or she may have done in the past.

But it really places aboriginals in double jeopardy.

Aboriginals, already detached from the legal system when it comes to jury duty, are also disproportionately barred from serving because of criminal records.

Howard Sapers, the outgoing federal correctional investigator, [revealed in a 2013 report that approximately 3,400 First Nation, Métis or Inuit prisoners accounted for more than 20 per cent of the present federal Canadian prison population. Aboriginal Canadians make up just four per cent of the Canadian population.](#)

Sapers said aboriginal women comprised approximately 32 per cent of all female federal prisoners in 2010-11 — up more than 85 per cent in 10 years — and, based on current demographic trends, he said the rise in aboriginal prisoners will continue to outpace the general population in this country.

“We have miles to go before we’ve even completed the first steps of an appropriate response to the needs of aboriginal offenders,” he said in an interview this month, as he prepared to leave his post.

Johnston believes a disproportionate number of aboriginals are being deprived of having a say in the system that is “consuming their peoples’ liberty at voracious rates.”

The matter before the court Thursday was the subject of a massive study by former justice Frank Iacobucci.

In 2013, he recommended [the use of OHIP databases](#) to compile a list of First Nations individuals living on remote reserves for the purposes of compiling a jury roll.

He recommended a new co-operative framework between Ontario and Ottawa to compile band residency information, simplifying the wording on questionnaires sent to prospective jurors in the north, translating the questionnaire into First Nations languages where applicable, removing language threatening fines for non-compliance and giving them more time to return the jury questionnaire.

Some of his work is coming to fruition in northern communities when it comes to inquests, the subject that first brought the issue to wide attention.

But progress on native representation on juries hearing criminal matters is difficult to discern.

Serving on a jury and deciding the fate of a peer is the ultimate in democracy in this country. It is the way citizens can push back against overly aggressive police or prosecutors or help add closure to the victims of crime.

Thursday's decision was correct in the legal sense. But anything that limits the number of prospective jurors in this country is an affront to democracy.

Tim Harper is a national affairs writer. His column appears Monday, Wednesday and Friday. tharper@thestar.ca Twitter: @nutgraf1

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/05/21/top-court-clears-ontario-but-aboriginal-jury-problem-remains-tim-harper.html>

ASIRT finds RCMP acted appropriately in fatal shooting

By Jana G. Pruden, Edmonton Journal May 22, 2015

The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) has concluded a fatal shooting on a First Nations community northwest of Edmonton in 2013 was lawful and reasonable, and that no action should be taken against the officer involved.

The name of the man who was killed has never been made public by ASIRT, and he is described throughout a public statement on the shooting as “the Affected Person.”

The shooting happened on the Cold Lake First Nation on Aug. 15, 2013, as RCMP attempted to arrest a man who had evaded them for more than a year, and had reportedly told family members and others in the community that he would die before going back to prison.

“Despite the best efforts of the Affected Person’s family, the Affected Person remained resolute that he would not be taken into custody alive.” says the statement, about ASIRT’s concluded investigation into the case.

ASIRT says RCMP had been looking to arrest the man for “serious personal injury offences,” which was previously described by ASIRT as a sexual assault investigation. ASIRT says RCMP first tried to locate the man in late 2011 but were told he had fled into the bush, “intending to live off the land.”

The man’s family also told RCMP “there were concerns that the Affected Person would either kill himself or be killed rather than returning to prison,” ASIRT says.

The report notes that the man had a “significant related criminal history” and was facing the possibility of a long prison term, including possible indefinite incarceration as a dangerous offender. RCMP found the man in June 2012 inside a tarp shelter in the forest, but officers left after he grabbed “a long and slender object that the officer believed to possibly be a rifle or an axe,” ASIRT says.

Officers returned to the area days later but the man fled — possibly after seeing police helicopters.

“He had apparently noted the air support in the area and suspected that police would be looking for him,” the ASIRT report reads. “The Affected Person was not apprehended.”

ASIRT says the man “had made it clear that he would not allow himself to be arrested,” and that “he would not and could not go back to prison, and that he would either kill himself or provoke a situation that would result in his being killed.”

The ASIRT release says RCMP tried to get the man’s family to persuade him to turn himself in, but he did not. Instead, hearing that police had been at the home of a relative on the morning of Aug. 15, the man said he was going to die that day.

The man was shot after officers entered the home to arrest him. ASIRT says he produced a large knife, “held it up and out,” and then refused to drop it when ordered to do so.

The man was pronounced dead in hospital, having been shot twice in the chest. ASIRT says the confrontation took place within seconds.

“At the time of the execution of the warrant, the officer was lawfully placed and the force used was reasonable in light of the circumstances presented, notwithstanding the tragic consequences of the loss of a life,” the ASIRT statement concludes.

The Cold Lake First Nation is about 300 kilometres northwest of Edmonton.

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/ASIRT+finds+RCMP+acted+appropriately+fatal+shooting/11076158/story.html>

Aboriginal youth promote anti-violence

By [Svjetlana Mlinarevic](#), The Graphic

Tuesday, May 26, 2015 10:34:21 CDT AM



Video director Jeremy Johnson, Portage Friendship Centre insight mentor Andrea Houle, Aushya Houle, Azaria Houle, Dillan Houle, Erin Little, and Portage Friendship Centre insight mentor Debbie Parker. (Svjetlana Mlinarevic/The Graphic/Postmedia Network)

The change starts with you. That's the message a group of Portage la Prairie aboriginal youth want their peers to know when they watch a video they made regarding violence in aboriginal communities.

Created in partnership between the Portage Family Abuse Prevention Centre's (PFAPC) Harmony Project and the Portage Friendship Centre, the "Carry The Message" video shows vignettes of violence aboriginal youth feel have impacted their lives. The scenes show images of domestic abuse, bullying and prostitution interspersed with dreamy images of powwow dancers in a tropical forest.

"I want to thank the Portage Friendship Centre for being a part of this, to bring a message that is a message that represents a different world view as seen from a different cultural lens," said Joyce Schrader, executive director of the PFAPC. "I can assure you that no matter what cultural lens you're from that the message is still the same. It's a beautiful video and it will leave you with goosebumps."

One of the key symbols in the video was the eagle's feather, which PFC insight mentor Debbie Parker said represents a messenger as it "has a lot of roads in it."

“(The youth) have a lot of roads they have to walk on because they’re still young ... They had an opportunity to voice their message as to how they see it and how they wanted it shown and that was awesome,” she said.

Parker became emotional while watching the video and said it really resonated with her because of her history and the history of her people. For her, watching youth trying to stop the cycle of violence is a positive step and something that young people in the past were not as likely to try and stop. She said aboriginal children need more information and more guidance about violence awareness and that the aboriginal community can’t give up.

“The youth are sick of the violence,” said Parker. “The ones that are standing up, I think they’re sick of the violence. There’s one youth that just got kicked in the face and yet she’s not a violent girl in any way, she’s just trying to live her life and she got kicked in the face... These are the things we need to look after and look after the children who are here today (and tomorrow).”

One of the youth who appears in the video is teenager Dillan Houle, who said he wanted to be a part of the project as he wanted to bring awareness to domestic violence, even though he comes from a safe home. He also said he thinks by making the video with an aboriginal slant it would reach more aboriginal youth.

“Not everyone would tell someone (they’re being abused) and with the video it’ll show that there are resources out there and people out there for people who think they are alone.... In the reserve, there is a lot of domestic violence and poverty. It’s harsh. We’re making a difference in a good way,” he said.

It was a family affair for Houle as his two sisters, Aushya and Azaria, and his mother, Andrea, were also involved in the video. Andrea, an insight mentor at the PFC, said working on the project with her children was special.

“It’s very heartfelt to see the actual work that my children did on the video.... and thanks to the Creator for choosing them to get the message out,” she said.

Winnipeg video director Jeremy Johnson, who shot the “You Are Good Enough” video last summer, said that although the two projects differ in how they portray their message the message is still the same.

“The true heart of the whole visual came from them and my work was to try and translate their vision,” he said. “The eagle feather represented the message of ending violence and the opportunity of a new generation of young people to listen to the ancestors, who have come before them, and the elders who are still here today who remember and share the message that violence is not a traditional way of life. There is always an opportunity to chose love over violence.”

As this is the last Harmony Project initiative, Schrader's hope is that the essence of what the Harmony Project was all about will live on.

"I'm so proud of how far and wide spread the healthy youth relationship messages have spread to different communities, to different reserves, and it's interesting how I met the right people at the right time. The project has just taken on a life of its own," she said. "For me, it's really important that the project is going to live on beyond the end date and will resonate for a long time."

Direct Link: <http://www.portagedailygraphic.com/2015/05/26/aboriginal-youth-promote-anti-violence>

Aboriginal women now make up one-third of Canadian female prison population

Poverty-related crimes are becoming 'life-sentences' for aboriginal women, NWAC says

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 27, 2015 12:00 PM ET Last Updated: May 28, 2015 7:05 AM ET



The number of aboriginal women in Canadian prisons is on the rise, according to the federal prison watchdog and the Native Women's Association of Canada wants justice officials to do something about it.

Women of aboriginal descent now make up more than 35 per cent of the female prison population, Howard Sapers, Correctional Investigator of Canada, told CBC News this week. Aboriginal women represent about four per cent of the general population.



Howard Sapers is the outgoing Correctional Investigator of Canada.

Sapers said he's disappointed he'll be unable to continue working to improve outcomes of aboriginal women in prison. The Conservative government is planning to replace Sapers with a new ombudsman this year.

"We need some rethinking and one of the things that I'm very sorry that I'm not going to be able continue to pursue is improving the governance and accountability around aboriginal corrections in Canada," Sapers said.

Dawn Harvard, interim president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, agrees there is much work to be done.



Dawn Harvard, interim president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, young indigenous women are winding up with criminal records for attempting to protect their children in child welfare disputes.

'I'm not shocked by this'

The justice system lacks an understanding of the lives of indigenous women, Harvard said, adding that racism and poverty are the main factors in the number of aboriginal women in prison.

"Sad to say, I'm not shocked by this," she said. "This is unfortunately the direct result of what happens when a particular people are oppressed in their own territory."

Harvard said she is deeply concerned that non-violent crimes committed by indigenous women are ending up as indeterminate sentences because of punishments given inside the prisons.

"A very small, petty crime can turn into what is in essence, a life-sentence," she said.

'They expect them to do bad things'

Racism is pervasive throughout the justice system, Harvard said.

"They expect them to do bad things," she said of the perception justice officials have of young indigenous people. "They don't see it as an aberration or a one-time screw-up in an otherwise brilliant career, and they don't have rich parents to get them out of it."

Harvard said to address the issue changes are needed at all levels of the justice system including:

- training for police, judges and corrections officers about the history and current circumstances of indigenous peoples and communities
- better access to advocates for aboriginal families
- interventions for young indigenous people who become involved with the justice system

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/aboriginal-women-now-make-up-one-third-of-canadian-female-prison-population-1.3089050>

Editorial: Paucity of First Nations jurors

[Calgary Herald More from Calgary Herald](#)

Published on: May 27, 2015

Last Updated: May 27, 2015 3:00 AM MDT



The Supreme Court of Canada quite rightly got to the heart of the matter when it ruled last week that the lack of aboriginal jurors was no reason to overturn a conviction.

What if they put out a call for jurors and hardly anyone showed up? That — rather than any undertones of racial bias — appears to be the reason that a northern Ontario aboriginal man, Clifford Kokopenace, didn't have aboriginal jurors hearing his manslaughter case.

The Supreme Court of Canada quite rightly got to the heart of the matter when it ruled last week that the lack of aboriginal jurors was no reason to overturn Kokopenace's conviction. Everyone has a right to be tried by a jury of his or her peers, but the court heard that the response rates for requests for jury duty in aboriginal communities are quite low. If one's peers don't do their duty and step up to be jurors, then the trial can't simply be annulled; it has to go forward with other jurors.

The Ontario Court of Appeal had ruled that the lack of aboriginals was a breach of Kokopenace's rights to a trial by peers, and it therefore threw out his conviction in the stabbing death of a friend on the Grassy Narrows Reserve. However, among the 175 potential jurors, only eight were First Nations residents living on reserve. None of those was selected.

Juror selection is a rigorous process in which both defence lawyers and Crown attorneys can question the prospective juror as to whether they feel they can effectively listen to the evidence without pre-judging the defendant based on media reports. Potential jurors may also be eliminated for other reasons, such as the demands of school or work, and if they have a criminal record.

Since none of the eight potential jurors who were aboriginal were selected, it is reasonable to assume that they fell into one of the categories above. In other words, they were treated the same as any potential juror, regardless of race. That is exactly as it should be.

The Supreme Court wisely noted the real reason for the absence of aboriginal jurors: there is only about a 10 per cent response rate when on-reserve First Nations

residents are called for jury duty. Authorities did their best to find aboriginal jurors, but enough people simply didn't answer the call.

It is important not to jump to conclusions about some sort of inherent racism in the justice system. There may be instances elsewhere in the system of that, but in this case of jury selection, there wasn't. The court's ruling emphasized that this was basically about the inability to find aboriginal jurors.

Clearly, there should be some aboriginal people on a jury when an aboriginal defendant is on trial. But it is up to aboriginal people — not the court system — to step up and right this wrong.

Direct Link: <http://calgaryherald.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-paucity-of-first-nations-jurors>

Nunavik to Quebec: deliver better justice to our communities

“The system has to respect our values”

SARAH ROGERS, May 28, 2015 - 9:14 am



Josée Trottier and Jacques Prigent, with Quebec's justice department, took questions from KRG councillors May 27 on the region's travelling court system. (PHOTO BY SARAH ROGERS)

INUKJUAK — Quebec's travelling court and its justice system are failing Nunavimmiut and something needs to change, the Kativik Regional Government says.

During regional council meetings in Inukjuak May 27, the KRG's council passed a resolution urging Quebec to take action to improve the administration of justice in the region and better adapt it to northern realities.

"Nunavimmiut have the right to enjoy the same protection of, and support from, and accessibility to justice services despite the geographical and other constraints of Nunavik," the resolution read.

Many of Nunavik's concerns focus on Quebec's travelling court system, designed to bring the court into Nunavik's communities several times a year.

But that system is rife with problems: from delays, postponements and communication issues to a lack of appropriate facilities to host court proceedings.

KRG chair Maggie Emudluk also notes the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is supposed to guarantee Inuit culture is embedded in its government services.

"Forty years after the JBNQA, Quebec is actually not following the agreement concerning the court system," she told the regional council meeting May 27.

"The system has to respect our values. And we want to be part of the process."

The regional government is not alone in its concerns.

Earlier this year, [a report prepared by Quebec's bar association](#) called on Quebec to fix its northern justice system to fit the cultural and administrative realities of the region.

Even 25 years ago, when Makivik Corp. mandated the Inuit Justice Task Force to visit the region's communities to look at how the justice system was serving Nunavimmiut, its findings were similar.

And in recent years, Nunavimmiut told Parnasimautik consultations throughout the region that they feel poorly-served by the courts, Emudluk said.

"As Inuit, when we go to court, because it's not in our culture, we have absolutely no idea what is happening," Emudluk said. "We need to be educated and informed, because those who take a long time to go through court — even if they want to leave that part of their life behind — it's very difficult to fix themselves."

KRG councillors directed many of their concerns to two Quebec bureaucrats attending the meeting in Inukjuak May 27.

Jacques Prigent, who works in the office of Aboriginal Affairs at Quebec's justice department, noted that the number of criminal files opened in the region has risen significantly, from about 2,100 in 2009 to 3,400 in 2014.

And that's motivated the court to visit the region more often, he said.

While the court used to spend about 170 days a year in Nunavik, that's now grown to about 229 days.

That could help the court process more cases in the region, although the travelling court still has to contend with the weather, Pr gent said.

When a court visit is cancelled due to bad weather, Pr gent acknowledged that it's almost impossible for the court to return to a community immediately afterwards, since the travelling court docket is planned well in advance and books visits five days a week.

And the travelling court remains unable to visit three Nunavik communities — Akulivik, Umiujaq and Ivujivik — Pr gent said, because there are no facilities to host proceedings.

“It's the reality of our system,” he said.

“It's clear that our justice system is facing big challenges in general, but faces bigger challenge in First Nations and Inuit communities,” Pr gent told KRG councillors. “It's coming from all parts of Canada: that we need to change the way we do justice in some regions.”

Pr gent said the province is willing to work with Nunavik towards alternative forms of justice and social reintegration, like the region's [Saqijuq project](#).

Saqijuq, which means a change in the wind's direction, would use community intervention to prevent some Nunavimmiut struggling with addiction from going through the prison system.

“Saqijuq is a program that we all believe in,” said KRG executive director Isabelle Parizeau. “It's necessary, but it's not the solution to everything.”

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavik_to_quebec_deliver_better_justice_to_our_communities/

Imprisoned Cree mother prevented from attending 22 year-old son's funeral

[National News](#) | May 27, 2015 by [Jorge Barrera](#) |



(Connie Oakes in an undated photo supplied by the family)

Jorge Barrera

APTN National News

[A Cree woman imprisoned for a murder she says she didn't commit was denied a chance to attend the funeral of her 22 year-old son who was buried Wednesday in Nekaneet Cree Nation territory.](#)

Connie Oakes managed to send a beaded hawk feather and a starblanket she crafted for her son Joseph Carry who was buried with the items, according to family members.

Oakes was prevented from attending Carry's funeral by the National Parole Board who rejected her second compassionate leave application this week. The National Parole Board last week denied Oakes' first compassionate leave application to see her son before he died.

Oakes' physical fitness regime inside prison worked against her release, said one of her appeal lawyers Alexandra Simic.

"The National Parole Board claimed that because she was in such good shape, that they considered her to be a flight risk because she could run," said Simic.

Carry died early Sunday from cancer, two days after a Calgary judge issued a separate ruling against Oakes' application for appeal bail.

[Carry was given three weeks to live by his doctor in mid-April. He married his long-time sweet-heart on May 16. They have a two year-old son.](#)



Joseph Carry, 22, died early Sunday from cancer. Carry is Connie Oakes' son. (APTN/Photo)

Connie spoke to her family Wednesday morning and wept on the telephone from the Edmonton Women's Institution which is about 700 kilometres northwest of Nekanee, located in Cypress Hills of southern Saskatchewan.

"She called me this morning crying and told me to say goodbye to Joe for her and to tell him that his mom loves him so much," said Linda Oakes, who is Connie Oakes' aunt.

"It is just a travesty that Connie has been denied this opportunity to see her son before he died and then to bid him farewell," said Kim Pate, executive director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, who has known Oakes for several years.

Pate said prison staff was supportive of Oakes' application. She said she knows of no instance where an imprisoned mother has ever attempted to escape while seeing a dying child or attending their funeral.

"No mother that I know of has ever attempted to escape in those instances," said Pate, who filed a sealed affidavit in support of Oakes' appeal application. "It think it is an absolutely unjust and unfair decision."

Oakes is appealing her second degree murder conviction partly on a fresh evidence submission. The Crown's main witness in Oakes' murder trial now says she doesn't believe Oakes was at the trailer where Medicine Hat, Alta., resident Casey Armstrong was found dead in his bathtub in May 2011.

Scott says in a sealed affidavit filed as part of Oakes' appeal that Medicine Hat police fed her information about the case while she was stoned during interrogation sessions that

lasted six months longer than disclosed to the defence before trial, according to a summary of the affidavit contained in the appeal application.

With no DNA, murder weapon or fingerprints, the police and Crown relied on Scott to build their case against Oakes. Scott, a self-described small time crack dealer with an IQ of 50, accused three other people of Armstrong's murder before pointing the finger at Oakes.

Medicine Hat police could also never determine the source of a man's size 11 bloody boot print found on the bathroom floor.

Oakes' appeal hearing is scheduled for Nov. 12.

Oakes oldest son Jameson John was killed on Halloween in 2002, two weeks after Oakes stepped out of federal prison in Edmonton after serving a sentence for drug possession and trafficking.

She still has one son, Jared, who is 13.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/05/27/imprisoned-cree-mother-prevented-attending-22-year-old-sons-funeral/>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Paige's tragic story hits close to home for aboriginal mother in Vancouver

Melanie Lecoy dealt with addiction and abuse throughout her childhood

By On the Coast, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 21, 2015 9:32 PM PT Last Updated: May 21, 2015 9:47 PM PT



Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. After hearing Paige's story, Melanie Lecoy is sharing her experiences of addiction and abuse in the hopes it will enlighten the public about the troubles facing aboriginal youth. (Jonathan Hayward/The Canadian Press)

An aboriginal mother of six living in East Vancouver sees several parallels between her life and that of Paige, the 19-year-old girl who struggled for three years with addiction and abuse in the Downtown Eastside and died of an overdose near Oppenheimer Park.

[A recent report from B.C.'s Representative for Children and Youth](#) outlines the numerous ways social services, police, and other frontline workers failed to rescue a Paige, who experienced abuse and addiction at an early age.

"That's one of the main things I really related to with Paige, nobody really taking the time to have empathy and compassion," said Melanie Lecoy, who was placed into ministry care when she was 13. "As soon as they felt they couldn't handle me, they'd just put me in another home."



Paige, 19, died of a drug overdose after a troubled life on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. (B.C. Children's Representative)

"I think it brought up a lot of my attachment disorder, with not having my mother and father. I didn't really belong anywhere, I didn't really have anywhere to go or to call home, so I was pretty stone cold now that I think about it."

Diagnosed with PTSD

Lecoy never understood why she was acting out until she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder five years ago.

"It really helped me understand myself. All the way through my teens I was just a hurting teenager and I needed help, I needed people to stick by me," said Lecoy. "I had all of the

paperwork that showed what I went through in my childhood and my youth, sexual abuse, sexual assault, physical and emotional abuse."

"Nobody ever tried to help me understand myself. I was just a whirlwind of emotion and they didn't have anybody to help me and give me direction in my life. I was kind of just winging it by myself."

Lecoy says she tried to commit suicide three times, but after reconciling with her family, her situation has improved.

Just need basic words like 'How are you?'

"I only needed a few people around me to actually really take time and ask how I am. Just basic words like 'How are you?'"

Lecoy hopes sharing her story will enlighten others and help them understand the situation many young aboriginal youth face today.

"I'm doing really good. I love watching my kids grow. There are various ways I've educated myself to understand myself and the trauma of my family. [I'm an] inter-generational survivor, activist at heart, a women against violence. For me it's making an impact on my people. That's what I am concerned about."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/paige-s-tragic-story-hits-close-to-home-for-aboriginal-mother-in-vancouver-1.3083078>

The hard life and tragic death of Paige

By Dale Bass, Kamloops This Week May 23, 2015



Photos of Paige from Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond's scathing report about her life in and out of foster care and drug-overdose death at age 19.

KAMLOOPS, B.C. — The woman charged by the provincial government to look out for children wants to know how the system failed Paige.

Two frontline social workers in Kamloops have an idea why: The system that stepped into Paige's life when she was just five months old is broken.

Vicki Michaud manages the family-services part of the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Centre.

In 18 years as a social worker, she has seen what the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) calls case files, but which are realities about children.

"And most of their stories are horrific," she said. "It's foster care after foster care after foster care."

Jeannie Cardinal, executive director of the White Buffalo Aboriginal Health Society and Resource Centre, agreed.

"With the current framework of the systems, we are constantly missing the mark in really making a difference, from quality of life in daily living, to preventing a death," she said.

Paige, an aboriginal child, was one of those who spent much of her 19 years of life in and out of the foster-care system.

Born in Kamloops in 1993, she died in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in 2013 while still a teen.

Calling it one of the most horrific cases she has investigated, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, the province's Representative for Children and Youth, wrote in her 80-page report that "the child-protection system, health-care system, social-service agencies, the education system and police consistently failed in their responsibility to this child and passively recorded her life's downward spiral."

Turpel-Lafond continued to note none of the agencies that intersected in Paige's life from her birth to her death provided her with "meaningful assistance, leaving her in a dangerous situation that led to her death."

The advocate calls it indifference to Paige because the many people who dealt with the girl and her family were aware of the challenges she faced.

Michaud, while not aware of the story of Paige, said from her vantage point, she sees a system that has been broken for years, with ministry social workers dealing with so many files and paperwork.

'SICKENING' OVERLOAD OF CASES

“Half of them are carrying more than 60 caseloads,” Michaud said.

“It’s sickening. They can’t get to all these files.”

Cardinal points to a lack of funding as another challenge.

“Issues are further impacted by systemic dysfunctions, underfunding of initiatives.

“Often what is more absent is in funding sources missing the targeted area of funding to truly support the front-line workers themselves in being equipped to target the appropriate and necessary areas of healing and support to really make a difference,” she said.

“Even when this is done well, it is often an underfunded initiative and far too short to really make the long-haul impact for positive change generationally, as well as for the healing to be extended to the broader community.”

From birth to death, Paige was the subject of more than 30 serious child-protection reports, none of which were adequately investigated, Turpel-Lafond said.

Throughout Paige’s life, Turpel-Lafond wrote, she was taken from her mother and returned, placed with other family members who, like the mother, had addiction issues, then returned again to her mother.

Paige’s mother died of a drug overdose about a year after Paige’s death.

Although she sees the overload and stress in MCFD social workers in Kamloops, Michaud said they have a good relationship with other organizations like hers that provide supports to aboriginal families in crisis, services that can range from advocacy in the judicial system to family supports.

“Is the home safe? Are there addiction issues?

“Whatever the case may be, we want to know, Why was a child removed and what needs to be done to get them back in the home?”

Michaud wondered if there were aboriginal agencies involved in Paige’s life or if it was dominated by MCFD and non-aboriginal social workers.

“We know how to work with our people,” she said.

“We know how to provide that support services. When you get non-aboriginal workers, it’s a struggle because they don’t know our culture.

“We’re all sitting there wanting to provide services.”

A spokesman from Turpel-Lafond’s office told KTW: “I spoke to our chief investigator and he informs me that Paige was not living on-reserve and was not closely connected to a First Nation, and therefore was not served by a delegated aboriginal agency.”

For Cardinal, the message is simple: “The system needs to change to save lives and the loss of life should not be sole indicator, nor should it be Paige’s or anyone else’s legacy.

“Our job is to restore our families and communities through healing, hope and skilled approaches,” Cardinal said.

“Our child and families are not just our future, they are our now.”

REPORT ON PAIGE ONE OF MANY

The report on Paige’s life isn’t the first one Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond has written about a child who has died in B.C.

And, through the years, the children's advocate has issued 148 recommendations on how to improve services provided to vulnerable children.

Last year, she issued a report on how the province has dealt with those recommendations, describing it as “just not good enough.”

About half of the recommendations have been substantially or fully implemented, but there are key ones she said have been ignored, including suggestions to address cross-ministry involvement and organization and to create a minister of state for youth mental health.

“Government has ignored that recommendation and failed to address this area as a whole in any meaningful way,” she wrote in the report.

Health Minister Terry Lake was not available for comment, but his ministry sent a statement on actions taken and money being spent.

The statement said the recommendation for a ministry of state for youth mental health was reviewed, but rejected.

The statement said it would not be “a good use of limited taxpayer dollars — as much of the work that would fall to that position is being done through those other channels” of a parliamentary secretary for child mental health and anti-bullying.

In addition, the statement noted there are programs working with the medical and social-work fields to expand and co-ordinate access to mental-health and substance-use services for youth.

The statement said the Ministry of Children and Family Development spends \$94 million annually on youth mental-health and substance-use challenges, while Lake's ministry, through health authorities, provides emergency, acute, specialized and tertiary-level mental-health and substance-use services for children and youth.

As of March, the statement said, through partnering with the province's doctors, the health ministry has spent \$4.4 million in the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Collaborative to support children, youth and families dealing with these issues.

The statement noted the health ministry spent \$1.38 billion in 2013-2014 on mental-health and substance-use issues for all ages, an increase of 63 per cent from 2000.

A CHRONOLOGY

Paige's life:

- 1993: Born in Kamloops.

Her mother is 16 years old. Paige is often left with family members when her parents, who struggled with substance abuse and domestic violence issues, were unable to look after her.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) removes her from the home when she is five months old after her parents left her alone in their apartment.

She is returned a month later with a supervision order allowing a social worker to oversee her care but is removed two more times in the next seven months.

She is returned each time.

- 1995: Paige is 19 months old and MCFD offers her mother an intermittent-care agreement allowing the mother to leave Paige with a foster parent for a few days each month if she feels stressed by the pressures of parenting. The mother uses this for nine months but no supports are put in place to help the mother with her substance-abuse problems. In December, Paige is diagnosed with Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder affecting her lungs, eyes, heart and blood vessels.
- 2001: MCFD is told the boyfriend of Paige's grandmother molested her. Paige confirms this, but later recants when a key family member reacts with anger and disbelief.
- 2002: The mother again asks the ministry to place Paige with a foster parent so the mother can take a drug- and alcohol-treatment program. She removes Paige from that home a week later. MCFD investigates, acknowledges the ongoing drug and alcohol issues, but leaves Paige with her mother.

- 2009: The mother moves them to Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. In the ensuing five years, Paige is moved more than 50 more times through shelters, detox centres, foster homes, single-room-occupancy hotels and safe houses.

Paige continues to abuse alcohol. She attempts to go back to school and is assessed as having a positive attitude, but only attends about 25 per cent of the time. She leaves school in Grade 10. She has three abortions in three years. Her mother continues to go missing.

Ministry officials do not investigate many of the issues and the file is continually opened and closed. Notations include "The child prefers to stay with her mother," "youth not willing to leave situation with mom and not open to any ministry services" and "youth has no fixed address, moving between transition houses with her mother for many months. Mother battling drug and alcohol issues. It is very unlikely that the mother's situation will change."

- 2013: Paige is found dead in a washroom in Oppenheimer Park in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, having overdosed on drugs. She is 19.

Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/life/hard+life+tragic+death+Paige/11078223/story.html>

Indigenous culture key to student success: chief

By Jason Warick, The StarPhoenix May 22, 2015

A group of students dances under the bright sunshine to the thumping of a First Nations drum song while another balances and contorts themselves trying to learn traditional hoop dancing.

Just moments before, another group sang O Canada in Cree in the City Park Collegiate gymnasium to open the 3rd Annual Indigenous Languages Celebration Friday.

Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas said language and culture are key ingredients to the success of First Nations and Metis students.

"It really identifies who you are and more importantly who you can be," Thomas said.

Thomas used the example of St. Francis Elementary School, which has implemented Cree immersion in recent years. It had fewer than 100 students at one point. The immersion program has proven so popular, "it's bursting at the seams."

"It proves this is needed and it can be successful."

Chief Mistawasis School student Nevaeh Ledoux, 8, has been studying Cree language and culture for the past few years.

"I like the songs," she said. "And we learn about the old days."

Her mom, Malarie Ross, said it's important for their family and the community to work on reviving Indigenous culture.

"I think it's important for my daughter to learn another language because I feel we're losing our language," Malarie Ross said.

The kids attended sessions on beading, snare making, story telling, Metis jig and other topics.

Saskatoon Tribal Council director of education Valerie Harper said the students learn their identity, but the courses also give them an essential connection to their ancestors.

"Let's listen to our elders. Let's take back who we are as First nations people," she said.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Indigenous+culture+student+success+chief/11076216/story.html>

Hundreds gather at powwow to celebrate aboriginal graduates

U of S has hosted annual event for more than 20 years

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 27, 2015 10:38 AM CT Last Updated: May 27, 2015 3:30 PM CT

Aboriginal university and high school students are being celebrated today at the University of Saskatchewan's annual graduation powwow.

More than 360 U of S aboriginal students have applied to graduate this June. They were honoured during a special ceremony at noon.

More than 1,700 children from schools across the province attended, including 304 Grade 12 aboriginal graduates, who were also honoured at the powwow.

"I feel honoured, I feel proud of me and my fellow classmates," high school graduate Shadee Bighetty said.



Hundreds of dancers, drummers and singers of all ages from across North America took part in the University of Saskatchewan's annual graduation powwow. (Chanss Lagaden/CBC)

Bighetty said it took her six years to graduate from Oskayak High School in Saskatoon because she faced a number of challenges.

"I didn't have the best living conditions. I always had to move so Oskayak gave me the chance to graduate with the adult program," Bighetty said. "I'm so happy they gave me that chance."

High school graduate Leon Sanderson said he faced a number of challenges as well, including homelessness as well as drug and alcohol addictions.

"There's a lot of stereotypes of aboriginal guys especially, so that's why I wanted to be a role model cause I never really had any aboriginal role models growing up," Sanderson said.

The U of S has hosted the annual Graduation Powwow for more than 20 years

Hundreds of dancers, drummers and singers of all ages from across North America are taking part in competitions throughout the day, with \$25,000 in prize money to be awarded.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/hundreds-gather-at-powwow-to-celebrate-aboriginal-graduates-1.3089448>

Out of the mouths of young Inuit come answers

In Canada, researchers looking for help solving the problem of violence among young Inuit are increasingly turning to young Inuit themselves



Oh young Inuit, what can you tell us this time? (Photo: Nunavut Sivuniksavut)

May 27, 2015 - 7:49pm - By Kevin McGwin

Violence and abuse rates in Canada's Inuit territories speak, sadly, for themselves: as many as 60% of Inuit were sexually abused as children, and most have experienced some other form of physical abuse.

But community groups recently began looking for ways to to helping today's young Inuit address the problem of violence, researchers found that there was another statistic that spoke too loud to ignore: many teens in the region use social media for as much as two hours per day.

"This is how they communicate, and this was where we need to be if we wanted to get them to speak with us," says Marika Morris, of the School of Canadian Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa.

Dr Morris is in the midst of a violence-prevention project being carried out on behalf of Pauktuutit, an Ottawa-based group working with Inuit issues. The first part of her project, an on-line survey that asks Inuit ages 18-25 to answer questions about their social media habits, was launched earlier this month. In June, a violence-prevention seminar involving the same age group, and based partly on the survey responses, will be held.

Pauktuutit has placed violence at the top of its list of most pressing issues more academic research, and initially, Dr Morris expected she would conduct traditional face-to-face interviews with young Inuit in order to find out what could be done to help. She quickly changed her mind.

"It was clear that we needed a different approach. And if you want to talk to someone using social media you need to need to do it in their own language," she says.

The other change to the original plan was a decision not to use the interviews to document that violence exists. “We know it happens. There was no point in proving it again,” Dr Morris says.

To make sure she used the right language for the 27-question on-line survey, she turned to Inuit students from Nunavut Sivuniksavut, an Ottawa college programme, who were aided by counsellors from two Inuit mental-health organisations.

During the second part of the project, Dr Morris will turn to a focus group, organised by Mamisarvik, a mental-health centre, to ask people in the target group what they know about violence prevention. The session will also ask them what they would advise other young Inuit to do if they found themselves in the role of victim, perpetrator or bystander to a violent act.

“This allows us to draw on their experiences to find solutions. They are the experts in their own lives, after all. Who wouldn’t want to tap into that as a resource?”

Later, Pauktuutit intends to use the research to develop a social-media outreach strategy. But while Dr Morris has warmed to use the of such services to reach young people, she warns that, particularly in the North, where there can be gaps in internet coverage, other methods of communication, such as posters and community meetings, would remain important.

“This gives us another tool,” she says. “And what’s good about it is that in a time of severe budget cutbacks, communication through social media is a low-cost and self-replicating method.”

When it comes to spreading the concept of speaking to young people in the language of the young, she reckons social media will again be of use.

“Our project is focused on Canadian Inuit, but it could be used anywhere. The best way for them to learn about it will, naturally, be by seeing it on social media.”

Direct Link: <http://arcticjournal.com/culture/1618/out-mouths-young-inuit-come-answers>

First aboriginal woman graduated from U of S a century ago

By [Thomas Piller](#) Associate Technical Producer Global News, May 28, 2015 8:28 am



University of Saskatchewan celebrates a century since the first aboriginal woman graduated on campus.

SASKATOON – A century ago, the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) had its first female aboriginal graduate. Annie Maude (Nan) McKay is credited with paving the way for indigenous students.

While studying, she served as staff for The Sheaf, was a member of the Students Representative Council and was secretary of the campus YWCA. McKay graduated with a bachelor of arts in 1915 and was selected as one of the university’s “100 alumni of influence” in 2007.

On Wednesday, the university held its annual graduation powwow on campus in Saskatoon honouring the graduates of 2015. Over 360 U of S aboriginal students were honoured along with 304 high school students.

Dancers, drummers and singers of all ages from across North America took part in the festivities.

“This culture is so very important, it’s the foundation of our strength as First Nations and Métis and Inuit people, bringing this onto campus is a way in which we represent ourselves,” said Graeme Joseph, U of S team leader of aboriginal student success.

“When think about the population of the university being 10 per cent aboriginal it’s important that we’re reflective of our community.”

In the last five years, the number of indigenous students on campus has risen 29 per cent.

The retention rate among those students is at 66 per cent with university officials saying they hope to increase it by 10 per cent to match that of non-aboriginal students.

Meaghan Craig contributed to this story

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/2021769/first-aboriginal-woman-graduated-from-u-of-s-a-century-ago/>

Aboriginal Health

Ottawa study offers grim look at mental health of aboriginal youth

[Anaïs Voski, Ottawa Citizen](#) [More from Anaïs Voski, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: May 22, 2015

Last Updated: May 22, 2015 8:04 PM EDT

Aboriginal youth are nine times more likely to be depressed and three times more likely to think about suicide compared to non-aboriginal youth, according to a report released Friday at the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health.

The *My Life, My Wellbeing* report, which concludes nearly three years of research, offers grim insight into the lives of aboriginal youth in the Ottawa region and the Champlain Health Integration Network.

The study includes survey results from 310 young people and sought to understand the scope of mental health and addiction issues, the availability of services, and the appropriate response to youth needs.

The research was critical because it provides specific data for the Ottawa region that will allow for a better understanding of the needs here, says Allison Fisher, executive director of the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health.

“That is extremely important, because based on what we know, we can start developing coherent plans that allow us to move forward from here. It’s critical,” she said.

The report, led by the Wabano Centre, was sponsored by the Champlain LHIN and commissioned by the Champlain Aboriginal Health Circle Forum. The forum represents the more than 43,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who live in the Champlain region, including the Pikwàkanagàn and Akwesasne communities.

Fisher said it is time to focus on aboriginal youth because they make up about 50 per cent of native communities across the country. In the Champlain region, 40 per cent are under the age of 25, and 20 per cent are ages 13-24.

The 310 young survey participants expressed a specific desire to work with providers who understand their culture and who can incorporate aboriginal teachings and practices into their services.

Jessica Dinovitzer, the youth leader of the Native Circle at Youth Services Bureau, said she's pleased with the report because she did not find appropriate help when she was seeking it as a teenager years ago.

"When I first tried looking for help regarding PTSD, it was quite difficult because there wasn't much offered, but now there's much more, and here at Wabano, too," said Dinovitzer, who said she was born into Mohawk-German-Irish-Scottish family and adopted into a Jewish family.

"Native teachings helped me not only connect better with myself, but with others as well, and helped me better understand the four requirements to healing, which are the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional well-being," she said.

"The fact that they used the methods of our teachings to help us heal and to reinforce our sense of community helped us connect better with each other, too."

Chantale LeClerc, CEO of Champlain LHIN, said the findings are important for the short- and long-term health strategy for the region and will remain a priority for the network.

"We want to make sure that the work we're doing is appropriate for aboriginal youth and it truly meets their needs in terms of respecting their culture and their identity," LeClerc said.

Champlain LHIN has already been acting on some of the study's recommendations, such as creating drop-in counselling for youth at the Wabano centre, as well as the permanent position of a "navigator" who will help aboriginal youth find, navigate, and access services in a culturally sensitive way when they have a mental health and/or an addiction issue.

"We'll see if we can grow this in other parts of our region, which will depend on how this navigator and drop-in counselling are received and the impacts they're able to have," she said.

Fisher said she thinks the biggest challenge is building bridges between aboriginal and non-aboriginal agencies, but said the challenge should be viewed as a journey.

"There should be recognition that we don't know everything and we have learning to do, but at least we begin that journey together. I think when you can do that, you're off to a good start. This report now allows us to have that much-needed frank conversation" she said.

Highlights from the study

2

The number of times more likely aboriginal youth are to face suicidal ideation compared to youth overall in Ottawa (16.4 per cent vs eight per cent)

3/10

Aboriginal youth who have been victims of mental or emotional abuse

2/10

have been victims of bullying

9 the number of times more likely aboriginal youth are to face depression in Canada (55 per cent vs. 6.5 per cent)

29% substance abuse among young aboriginals, compared to 13 per cent non-aboriginal youth in Canada

40% of aboriginal youth who are in elementary, middle or high school, 33 per cent are in college or university, while the remainder are not enrolled in school

60% of respondents who said the most important characteristics in a mental health / addictions provider was the understanding of aboriginal approaches, the use of different aboriginal teachings and practices, and the involvement of elders in services and programs.

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/study-provides-grim-look-at-mental-health-of-aboriginal-youth>

UBC aboriginal doctor program beats 50 graduate goal five years early

University of British Columbia's Aboriginal MD admissions program aims to increase indigenous representation

By The Early Edition, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 22, 2015 4:47 PM PT Last Updated: May 22, 2015 4:53 PM PT



Roisin Dooley recently graduated from UBC medical school. (CBC)

The University of British Columbia has reached its goal of graduating 50 aboriginal doctors by 2020 — five years earlier than expected.

The UBC medical school set the goal in 2002 to increase indigenous representation. Now, 54 students have graduated through the Aboriginal MD admissions program, 35 more are enrolled and another 17 new students are expected in the fall.

Graduate Roisin Dooley, who will be doing her residency in obstetrics and gynecology in London, Ont., says she was motivated to become a doctor at a young age.

"Growing up, I had some aboriginal doctors in my life," she told *The Early Edition's* Rick Cluff.

"I think they served as a very positive role model for me and seeing them, I kind of got an idea that there's no limit to what I can achieve with education."

Dooley says she hopes her achievement can inspire her younger cousins back home in Northern Ontario to pursue their education.

James Andrew, UBC's Aboriginal Student Initiatives Coordinator, stresses the importance of having aboriginal doctors who can relate to clients on a social and cultural basis.

Though the program appears to be a success in the eyes of the university, Andrew says there's a lot more to do when it comes to training more aboriginal physicians.

"In reality, we still have a shortage of aboriginal doctors and if you do the math across Canada and B.C., less than one per cent of doctors are aboriginal," he said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ubc-aboriginal-doctor-program-beats-50-graduate-goal-five-years-early-1.3084298>

Canada must improve native education, health care now: Paul Martin

[Mark Kennedy, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: May 28, 2015

Last Updated: May 28, 2015 5:39 PM EDT



Former prime minister Paul Martin

Canada has a “moral” obligation to respond comprehensively to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and to improve funding for First Nations education, says former prime minister Paul Martin.

In an interview Thursday with the Citizen, Martin said Canadians need to pay close attention to a report being released next week by the TRC, which spent six years examining how the federal government sent thousands of aboriginal children to church-run residential schools over many decades.

Martin said the school system was an attempt to assimilate aboriginals and amounted to “cultural genocide.”

“It created a huge psychological damage on generation after generation of indigenous Canadians,” he said.

“The survivors and the generations that flow from those survivors — their children and grandchildren — effectively have post-traumatic stress disorder.”

Martin said most Canadians are not aware of the story.

“But when they become aware, they’re outraged.”

Martin said the federal government cannot let the TRC's report gather dust and should take action to help aboriginals now.

"We cannot waste another generation. That's got to be the government's reaction.

"It's a huge moral decision. I have met a lot of Canadians who were not aware. But when they are aware, I have never met a Canadian who has said they would walk away from this issue."

Martin said that even though the last school closed in 1996, discrimination endures to this day — with a "deliberate" decision by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government to underfund First Nations schools on reserves.

He said that unless the federal government changes that funding shortfall and also does better in areas such as aboriginal health care, Canada is on thin ice when it lectures other nations.

"We go into country after country and say that oppression and discrimination by government is wrong ... And yet, in our own backyard, we basically turn our backs on the values that have built this country."

Martin, who was prime minister from 2003 to 2006, has spearheaded an initiative following his political career to improve First Nations education.

He pointed to a recent project his Education Initiative was involved in that demonstrated literacy levels can be dramatically improved at aboriginal schools if they are properly funded.

The burning question is how the Conservative government will react to the TRC report — especially if it calls on Canada to improve relations with aboriginal people by taking concrete action in areas such as education, health care and justice.

Last year, the Conservative government proposed a bill to improve education standards on reserves, but it dropped the national plan when it was opposed by the Assembly of First Nations.

In the House of Commons Thursday, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt did not answer a direct question on whether Harper will participate in the TRC's events next week.

He said the "government" will be represented, and that the events are an important step toward reconciliation.

The residential schools saga is one of Canada's biggest untold stories. Since the 1880s, more than 150,000 aboriginal children were torn from their families and sent to about 130 residential schools. Many faced physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

The residential school survivors sued the federal government and churches — leading to a 2007 court settlement that issued compensation payments for former students, and established the TRC.

The commission heard from more than 7,000 witnesses and went to court to force the federal government to release archival documents.

Next Tuesday, the commissioners will release an executive summary of their findings, with recommendations.

Former national aboriginal leader Phil Fontaine credits Martin for getting the ball rolling towards a settlement of the lawsuit.

In 2008, Harper delivered an apology in the House of Commons on residential schools.

In a recent interview, Fontaine said Harper should not ignore the TRC report.

“This would be negligent and the height of irresponsibility. If it is just set aside, then the apology of June 11, 2008, will be rendered meaningless. Even though the words spoken by the prime minister on that day will be with us for all time.”

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What is the TRC?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to shed light on the experience of thousands of indigenous children in the government-mandated, church-run residential school system. Beginning in the 1880s, and well into the 20th century, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools, often against their parents' wishes. Many suffered cruelty and abuse.

What is it doing?

The TRC aims to help former students and their communities heal through reconciliation, and promotes awareness and public education for all Canadians. It also aims to create a more complete historical record of the IRS system and its legacy.

When will it report?

The TRC's summary report and recommendations will be unveiled on June 2 in Ottawa. Several more volumes of work will be unveiled over the course of the next year.

– Source: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/canada-must-improve-native-education-health-care-now-paul-martin>

Aboriginal high school students get look at University of Saskatchewan science programs

Ten students from B.C. and Saskatchewan spending week on campus

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 27, 2015 10:14 AM CT Last Updated: May 27, 2015 1:07 PM CT



Grade 11 student Dakota Nelson designing furniture out of cardboard for use in north African refugee camps. (David Shield/CBC News)

Ten First Nations and Métis students will spend this week touring science programs at the University of Saskatchewan.

The Grade 11 students from Saskatchewan and British Columbia will spend a week alongside faculty members from kinesiology, engineering and the Canadian Light Source synchrotron.

The program is designed as a way to get more First Nations students enrolled at Canadian universities.

Students in the program's engineering section have been working on designing furniture out of cardboard for people in north African refugee camps.

"It's been pretty fun," said Dakota Nelson, a student from Campbell River, B.C. "We're still in the design process. We're trying to think of new, different ideas and trying to be unique with the designs."

The program has some students thinking about science as a career.

"I've always loved building," said Lionel Ratt, a student at Saskatoon's Oskayak High School. "When they were showing us around, everyone's so smart and I'm really interested in it.

This is the first year the Verna J. Kirkness Education Foundation has partnered with the University of Saskatchewan with the program. The foundation has run the program for years at the University of Manitoba.

Professors working in the program are incorporating how First Nations and Métis people historically used engineering in their daily lives.

"You look at all the different designs of watercraft across Canada from First Nations, and there's lots of very distinctive designs," said engineering professor Sean Maw. "It fits into our teaching of the design process in engineering. With the students, we can illustrate key design points."

The students will be doing experiments, attending research meetings and assisting with lab work.

They will be on campus until Friday.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/aboriginal-high-school-students-get-look-at-university-of-saskatchewan-science-programs-1.3089437>

Aboriginal History

Aboriginal communities help put names to faces of the past

Project Naming expands focus after identifying thousands of Inuit in archival photos

By Max Paris and Susan Lunn, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 28, 2015 3:46 PM ET Last Updated: May 28, 2015 7:14 PM ET



Four Inuit kids lean against a wall in Lyon Inlet, Northwest Territories, now part of Nunavut. It was taken in 1933. (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs/Library and Archives Canada)

For over half a century, [Barnabus Arnasungaaq](#)'s self-confident stare rested anonymously in the vaults of Library and Archives Canada. The image of the sculptor from Baker Lake, Nunavut was one of thousands begging to be named.

Then, Canada's archivists decided to do something about the stacks of nameless or erroneously identified photos in its vaults. In partnership with Nunavut Sivuniksavut — an Ottawa-based leadership program for Inuit youth — and Nunavut's department of culture, the national archives launched Project Naming in 2001.

Its main goal was to answer a simple question: do you know this person?

More than a decade later, the project's success in answering that question has led it to expand its call for help, to identify Inuit, First Nations and Métis people of the past in the rest of Canada.



Barnabus Arnasungaaq of Baker Lake, Nunavut, a world renowned soapstone carver, 1949 (S.J. Bailey / Canada. Indian and Northern Affairs / Library and Archives Canada)

"Names are a crucial part of [Inuit] self identity and who they connect with. Their relatives and their whole kinship system and values are based around that. So adding names to those faces is an important thing to do," explained Beth Greenhorn, manager of Project Naming.

Project team members went through the laborious task of digitizing the photos, loading them onto laptops and then sending them back to Nunavut's far-flung villages with the students of Sivuniksavut. The young adults would then visit elders in their home towns and ask if they knew the people in the photos. In the last decade and a half, 2,000 faces have been named.

"It's a way also by just working with younger generations of aboriginal communities, we can hopefully give them a sense of their past and a grounding of who they are and hopefully a sense of pride in their culture," said Greenhorn.

Turning to Facebook

This week, Project Naming launched [a new online search tool](#) to help expand the project in a quest for names from Inuit communities in northern Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. Next week sees the launch of a Facebook page.

On top of that, the project will begin to put collections of southern First Nations and Métis peoples online.

"I think it helps with understanding your identity and feeling like you're part of the community to learn about your ancestors," said Deborah Kigjugalik Webster, an author and historian, who comes from Baker Lake, Nunavut.

Webster got involved when she and her mother started poring through LAC's online database.

"We searched Baker Lake and we found photos of relatives and community members," she said. She and her mother used the online forms to identify the people they knew.

There is a certain urgency to Project Naming that Webster made sure to emphasize.

"She [Webster's mother] is the one who knows the family. She's older than me so she can identify people I can't. I think it's important this information be recorded now, before it's too late," she said.

One of Webster's favourite finds is a picture given to her by Greenhorn. In it is a woman and three girls fishing through a hole in the ice.

It was Webster's grandmother, her mom and two aunts.

"[A beautiful family photo](#) of my mother doing her favourite thing with her family."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/aboriginal-communities-help-put-names-to-faces-of-the-past-1.3091103>

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Douglas Todd: Canada's immigrant-aboriginal knot

Self-condemnation of past treatment of natives has led to absence of immigration debate

By Douglas Todd, Vancouver Sun columnist May 22, 2015



Canadian courts and governments have been trying to atone for the past through land-claim agreements, housing allowances and compensation to survivors of residential schools.

In the minds of many Canadians, the treatment of aboriginals and immigrants is inextricably tied together, and it's creating moral confusion.

I have witnessed on dozens of occasions a discussion about Canada's immigration policies going sideways when someone suddenly flags the plight of the country's aboriginals.

Whether it's in a coffee shop, at a conference or on the Internet, the person who raises the topic invariably maintains non-aboriginal Canadians are guilty of profiting from land that was originally aboriginal.

Therefore, their argument goes, it's hypocritical for any Canadian who has benefited from migration to aboriginal land to want to have a say over future immigration.

Each time someone plays this aboriginal card, any hope of a reasonable discussion ends.

European observers are among those who have noted the strange public silence in Canada. They chalk up the absence of a vibrant debate on immigration policy partly to long-standing French-English tensions, but mostly to self-condemnation about past treatment of aboriginals.

It doesn't need to be this way. It's possible for Canadians to sort through our possible blameworthiness for the "sins of our ancestors," so we can discuss these issues more openly and systematically.

Almost every person who lives in Canada, population about 34 million, forms what cultural geographers call "the host culture." That includes people whose ancestors arrived more than 400 years ago, as well as immigrants who moved here in the past decade.

It should go without saying "the host culture" includes Canada's roughly 1.5 million aboriginals, many of whom are extremely critical of Ottawa bringing in 275,000 additional people each year.

Still, as wise aboriginal leaders such as B.C. Chief Robert Joseph remind us all: "No one's leaving."

So what kind of country do those who intend to stay in Canada hope to create?

Michael McDonald, an emeritus applied ethicist at the University of B.C., says it's worth sorting through how our obligations to aboriginals are categorically different from our obligations to immigrants.

First, McDonald makes it clear contemporary Canadians "are not directly responsible for what their ancestors have done to aboriginals. There's nothing we can do to directly undo the past. We don't have a time machine to go back."

But McDonald believes Canadians who benefit from what happened to aboriginals need to do what they can today to atone for any wrongs of the original settlers (the Europeans who established Canada's current laws and customs) and of more recent immigrants.

"If we inherited a lot of benefits from the dispossession (of land held by aboriginals), it's wrong to say, 'Tough luck guys, the statute of limitations is over on this,'" McDonald said.

The past devastation of aboriginal culture in Canada needs to be overcome in the present, however imperfectly. That's what Canada's courts and governments have been trying to do by signing vast land-claim agreements, providing aboriginal housing allowances and granting billions of dollars to survivors of residential schools. The complex reconciliation process goes on.

But the moral knot remains for many Canadians.

“How do we move forward on the immigration question?” McDonald asks. “We can’t say we can’t discuss it until we resolve aboriginal issues. That would be like someone saying, ‘I can’t pay my rent until I deal with my child-support payments.’”

As we do in the rest of our multi-tasking lives, we need to act on more than one ethical policy issue at a time.

What are some key immigration questions McDonald believes Canada needs to face?

One immediate concern is responding to the relationship between Metro Vancouver and Toronto’s unaffordable housing costs and immigration and foreign ownership.

“I’m appalled by the price of housing in Metro Vancouver,” McDonald said. “I can’t believe it. My daughter just moved to Montreal because she couldn’t afford to live here.” The next generation and newcomers are being frozen out of these cities, and others.

Beyond dealing with such domestic effects of immigration policy, Canadians also need to figure out their obligation to other countries.

McDonald is not alone in asking whether Canada should be, in effect, stealing so many skilled immigrants and temporary foreign workers, including nurses and doctors, from struggling countries such as South Africa and the Philippines.

“It’s a very big issue,” said McDonald. “How do we deal with the fact we’re taking advantage of countries that have done the training and can’t retain their medical personnel. They have greater needs than we have.”

These are just two examples of the migration policy difficulties also rising to the fore in Britain, which about three years ago, unlike in Canada, abruptly began experiencing a broad-based discussion of immigration. Pollsters say it was the top issue in Britain’s May 7 election.

Even Britain’s centre-left party, Labour, was among the organizations that realized it had to respond to widespread worries about jobs being lost, wages being lowered and social welfare programs being depleted by migrants from poorer regions of the European Union.

Until the past few years, however, most people in Britain had their reasons for not talking much about immigration: Many felt badly about the past, particularly about the former British Empire.

As left-wing Oxford economist Paul Collier, author of *Exodus: How Migration is Changing Our World*, said, debate over immigration in Britain has been held back “by guilty reactions to many different past wrongs.”

After Labour's loss in the election, Guardian columnist Nick Cohen went further than Collier. He hammered centre-left British politicians and intellectuals for loathing their supporters and failing to fully challenge such issues as migration.

In a piece headlined "Labour would do better if it learned to like the English," Cohen said left-wing thinkers consistently portray the British middle and working classes as racist. They "reduce the national history to one long imperial crime, and the notion that the English are not such a bad bunch with many strong radical traditions worth preserving is rejected as risibly complacent. The intellectual left deplores racism but uses 'white' as an insult."

Adopting less inflammatory language, Collier maintains it's time for Britons, and the residents of the world's relatively few immigrant-receiving nations, to overcome their shame about the past, to develop a healthy sense of nationalism. That would lead to residents more thoughtfully discerning their different obligations to the host culture, newcomers and to the often-poor countries they leave behind.

Open borders do not work, Collier and others say. Even the richest countries only have so much economic and cultural carrying capacity. Some countries, such as Norway, have gone the opposite route of Canada: They have restricted immigration while meeting their duty to the world's poor through generous foreign aid.

Canadians need to get beyond either-or thinking on migration. The first logical fallacy to avoid is the one that says non-aboriginals cannot share opinions on immigration policy until they make everything absolutely right with First Nations. Things aren't that black and white.

Even while McDonald believes all Canadians, old-timers and new arrivals, need to continue to atone for what happened to aboriginals, he is quite capable, for instance, of admiring his ancestors, despite their being part of settler history.

"I'm proud of my ancestors in Quebec and Ontario. They survived a great deal of adversity. A lot of them were very poor. My grandmother was one of 16 children. They worked very hard and they were very good people."

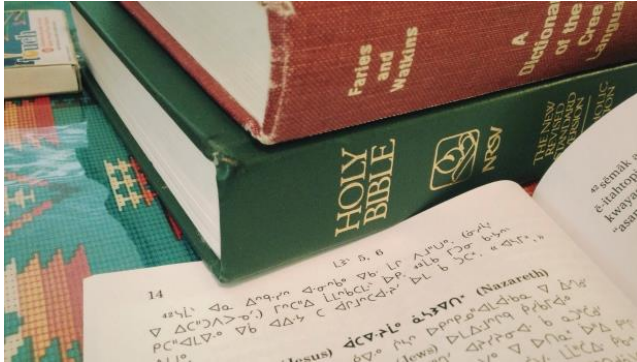
Read more:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Douglas+Todd+Canada+immigrant+aboriginal+knot/11075457/story.html#ixzz3bGbngNVF>

Gayle Weenie working on Plains Cree Bible translation

Weenie and her translating partner have completed books of Psalms, James, Luke and Matthew

By Josh Lynn, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 22, 2015 5:30 AM CT Last Updated: May 22, 2015 9:40 AM CT



Saskatoon's Gayle Weenie and Dolores Sand are working on a Plains Cree translation of the Bible. (Josh Lynn)

Much of Gayle Weenie's time after hours is spent on a project she's passionate about: creating an authoritative Plains Cree translation of the Bible.

"I think about all those people who were punished when they went to residential school for speaking their First Nation languages... and it's now kind of coming full circle and we're trying to revive them," explained Weenie during an interview on CBC's *Saskatoon Morning*.

While portions of the Bible have been translated previously, Weenie said the text is sometimes incomplete or needs refinement. Also, many translations are exclusively in syllabics.

"Northern communities in Saskatchewan tend to have Bibles written in syllabics and we're trying to promote the use of the Cree language with our people by using Roman orthography," Weenie said.

Weenie said for people just learning Plains Cree, rendering words in English characters can make it easier to pick up because the two languages share many sounds in common.

Weenie, who is originally from Sweetgrass First Nation and her translating partner Dolores Sand (originally from Muskeg Lake), work with with a pair of linguists and the Canadian Bible Society on the effort.

Having a network of Cree speakers across Canada is something Weenie said is key to the project's success.

"When I was in Guelph, Ontario at a [translation] workshop I met people from ... northern Ontario and northern Quebec and they're working on the Bible too, translating it

into their languages and they ask me how I say some of the words they're having trouble with," said Weenie.

Many of words that the Cree translators have trouble with, according to Weenie, stem from the Bible's locale.

"They don't have camels in the middle of Quebec."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/gayle-weenie-working-on-plains-cree-bible-translation-1.3082500>

Eisenberg's squaw and chief schtick a teachable moment

'Historical ignorance only goes so far,' says professor Marlene Atleo

By Wawmeesh G. Hamilton, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 23, 2015 11:33 AM ET Last Updated: May 26, 2015 3:44 PM ET



There's a disconnect between historical use of the word 'squaw' and the way it's interpreted today, says University of Manitoba professor Marlene Atleo. (Roswitha Majchrzak)

Just because actor Jesse Eisenberg didn't know the history of the word 'squaw,' doesn't mean he is excused for using it, Marlene Atleo said.

Atleo was responding to Eisenberg's story *Men and Dancing* in the May 25 edition of *The New Yorker*. In the story, he writes about a "squaw" telling a "Native American chief" to do a "rain dance."

Atleo, a member of the Ahousaht First Nation, is a professor at the University of Manitoba, and some of her research has focused on language and achievement.

"I'm not surprised that Eisenburg used [the] word. I don't suspect ignorance," Atleo said.

"Historical ignorance only goes so far. It's not an excuse and not funny."

There's a disconnect between historical use of the word squaw and the way it's interpreted today.

The word 'squaw' is derived from an Algonquin word meaning 'woman', and has origins in New England and in Quebec, said Atleo.

Other tribal groups, such as the Cree, Shawnee Nation and Ojibwe, had their own variations of squaw as well.

The problem isn't so much the word, but the pejorative nuance that non-indigenous people cloaked it with over time.

Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci was the first to use the word disreputably when describing hospitable indigenous women in the new world, a behavioural trait of women that was foreign to him.

Vespucci's writings about this observation spread across the continent, and so began the irreversible ugliness that now shrouds the once innocuous word.

Eisenberg's New Yorker piece is proof that history still plays out today.

It seems indigenous women continue to be locked in a fight they didn't pick.

But such fights are also teachable moments.

"When we have this kind of background subconscious piece coming on us repeatedly you can't fight it unless you drag it out," Atleo said.

"Drag those myths out of the dark of our subconscious. Bring them forward and say, 'this is why we are being flummoxed again and again.'"

According to Manitoba Treaty Commissioner James Wilson, calling out Eisenberg and others for inappropriate behavior toward indigenous women should also be the duty of indigenous men.

"If I hear jokes about women and it's men [telling them] , then it's my responsibility to call them on it," he said.

"It's a difficult thing to do. But you have to teach yourself to do it and you have to hold yourself accountable for doing it."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/eisenberg-s-squaw-and-chief-schtick-a-teachable-moment-1.3084868>

Two Okanagan Parks Renamed to Reflect First Nations Roots

May 22, 2015 by [Cassandra Jeffery](#)

A couple of Okanagan provincial parks have been renamed in honour of their traditional First Nation roots.

On Friday, Environment Minister Mary Polak and Osoyoos Indian Band Chief Clarence Louie announced that Haynes Point will now be officially known as “swíw’s park, pronounced swee-yous, and that Okanagan Falls provincial park will now be known as “sx^wəx^wnitk^w, pronounced s-wuh-wuneet-kw.



Minister of Environment Mary Polak and Osoyoos Indian Band Chief Clarence Louie celebrate renaming of provincial parks.

(Photo Credit: B.C. Government Flickr.)

The name changes are part of an agreement made between the Province and the Osoyoos Indian Band.

“This agreement between the Province and the Osoyoos Indian Band ensures visitors from around the world can continue to enjoy these parks and, at the same time, the protection of important archaeological sites and areas of significant cultural values,” said

Polak. “Thank you to Chief Louie and the Osoyoos Indian Band for working with us to develop this agreement, strengthening our government-to-government relationship.”

“swiʷs, means place where it is shallow or narrow in the middle of the lake. The name explains how the Okanagan ancestors of the Osoyoos Indian Band used the area as an important crossing point from one side of Osoyoos Lake to another.

”sxʷəxʷnitkʷ, means little falls and signifies a connection to Kettle Falls, which is known as big falls in the nsyilxcen language. These two falls were the most important fishing sites in the Okanagan Nation’s territory. This land was also once part of the Osoyoos Indian Band’s reserve land.



Photo Credit: BC Government Flickr.

“Language and place names are of utmost importance to the historical and cultural identity of people from any region or country,” said Chief Louie. “The early English and French settlers knew this - some of their first actions were to rename and map the countries they settled. swiʷs, sxʷəxʷnitkʷ and nʕaylintn are important Okanagan Nation place names that represent our culture and our tribal territory. These are historic names that have stood for thousands of years. First Nation language and place names deserve the same respect as their English names - not just in an historical context, but in a contemporary context as well. I am so proud to know that these names will now be formally recognized and acknowledged as part of the political, social and cultural future of this province. On behalf of all Okanagan (nsyilxcen) language speakers, I want to thank Minister Polak and the B.C. government for working with the Osoyoos Indian Band in the spirit of reconciliation and agreeing to bring back these three important Okanagan Nation place names.”

Direct Link:

http://www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/Provincial/15/05/22/Two_Okanagan_Parks_Renamed_to_Reflect_First_Nations_Roots

Barbara Kay: Kahnawake's 'marry out, stay out' policy is about survival, not race

[Barbara Kay](#) | May 27, 2015 7:53 AM ET



How can Canadians condemn race-based discrimination on a reserve when we tolerate language-based discrimination in Quebec?

In 1984 the Mohawk community of Kahnawake came up with a controversial membership law that bans all “mixed race” couples from living on its Montreal-area territory. Violation of the policy may result in eviction and/or the cutting off of benefits. The Supreme Court of Canada is to rule on whether or not Mohawk woman Waneek Horn-Miller and six other plaintiffs were deprived of their Charter rights in the last year after being ordered to leave Kahnawake because they are married/partnered to whites.

In Canada, in 2015, a couple is forced to leave their home because their relationship is interracial.

Amanda Deer is native. Her boyfriend is not. Most places in Canada, their relationship wouldn't attract a second glance. But it was enough to provoke an angry mob in Kahnawake, Que., over the weekend, who drove the pair from their home on the Mohawk reserve near Montreal. “They were trying to break my front door down. They started handling the handle, banging on the door, banging on the porch,” Deer told CBC News.

Deer said she wasn't sure whether the mob wanted her boyfriend to leave because he is not native, or because he has a criminal record; some Kahnawake residents, including Deer's neighbour, have cited the latter reason. There would be more ambiguity about the mob's motivation, were it not for the case of Cheryl Diabo, from the same reserve, whose home and car were vandalized last year — her garbage bin affixed with a sign that read “Kwe! My name is Cheryl and I live with a WHITE MAN” — because she was living with her white boyfriend.

Amongst other observers, the *National Post* editorial board is appalled by the policy. Inspired by a new incident, that of native Amanda Deer and her white boyfriend being driven from the reserve, their May 21 editorial stated that “in 2015, consenting adults should be able to take up residence with whomever they please, even if that residence happens to be on reserve.”

The policy is indeed race-based. But it is not inspired by racism, which implies hatred or contempt for others. The Mohawks are not denouncing intermarriage in itself (so the title for the editorial, “The town that bans interracial marriage” is therefore misleading). They do not hate white people or consider them inferior. They have no problem with Mohawks married to white people living elsewhere.

National survival is the issue. As I understand it, the Mohawks consider a policy under which intermarried couples enjoy the same rights as racially pure Mohawk couples will encourage more intermarriage, eventually resulting in a community so racially diluted that it will lose its cultural character and its *raison d'être*. As Kahnawake Mohawk Chief Michael Delisle said last fall: “All we are trying to do is preserve, not only culture and language and identity, but who we are as a people.”

Well, he has a point.

And it is a point that has been recognized as legitimate. Quebec's Bill 101, which actively suppresses the language rights of anglophones in Quebec and education rights for children of anglophone Canadians from outside Quebec (effectively precluding a good deal of human inflow), was deemed kosher by the SCC on the grounds of linguistic — and therefore cultural — fragility.

It seems a little late in the game to be shocked that asymmetrical rights are accorded to aboriginals. Their reserves are not governed on democratic principles. They have no property rights as individuals. They are accorded affirmative rights in goods and services for which other Canadians aren't eligible. The list of “equality” disparities is endless. First Nations are different from other Canadians, and here is one more difference that we may find unpalatable, but one that is really none of our business. It's their territory, and who merits “citizenship” on sacred land is as fundamental to aboriginal identity as language is to québécois identity.

The Kahnawake policy is repugnant to us because we accept that creedal and constitutional democracies make for the best societies. But aboriginals were here before

us, and it is only fair to concede that, having appropriated most of the lands they inhabited, we have no right to judge the way of life they choose to follow on the small domains over which they maintain sovereignty.

It's not as if — like Jews, say, whose collective identity is also based on a piece of land that is sacred to them — aboriginal culture can continue to flourish in a diaspora. The Jewish religion became portable when its principles, sacred language and folkways were encoded in a written constitution, the Torah. First Nations do not have a constitution, only an oral tradition. Their culture is therefore not “portable.” Their numbers are small. The land is all.

Tribalism — or “reserve nationalism,” as one anthropologist puts it — is an ancient and organic form of human society. It has been around a lot longer than the nation state. Kinship is a tribe's strength. It isn't a pretty notion to us now, and certainly all the more distasteful given the genocides we have witnessed on grounds of bloodlines. But that doesn't mean that such a system of cultural continuity is in itself immoral.

If, long ago, Canada had chosen brutally to dismantle the reserve system and insist on aboriginals' integration, we wouldn't be having this discussion, because there would be no sacred aboriginal space, just deracinated aboriginals. But Canada did make the decision to protect their culture, which means acknowledging the legitimacy and importance of tribal bloodlines.

We can't have our asymmetrical cake and eat it too. Apart from the deplorable bullying we've seen in enforcing the policy — mobbing, vandalizing, intimidation, which must be firmly suppressed — in principle, I side with Kahnawake.

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/barbara-kay-in-defence-of-kahnawakes-marry-out-stay-out-policy>

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

Nunavut mine training society gets \$1.7 million from Ottawa

Society has helped place hundreds of Kivalliq Inuit into mining jobs

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, May 26, 2015 - 12:25 pm



The Kivalliq Mine Training Society helps to train Kivalliq Inuit to prepare them for work at mines in the region, including the Meliadine gold project outside of Rankin Inlet. (FILE PHOTO)

Nunavut's Kivalliq Mine Training Society will get \$1.7 million in federal funding to continue helping Nunavummiut get jobs in the mining industry.

The Rankin Inlet-based training organization has helped train and place hundreds of Inuit into mine-related jobs since its launch in January 2010.

"After two years with great results for Inuit people in entering and advancing in mining and related occupations, the Kivalliq Mine Training Society is delighted in the continued support of the government of Canada," said Evan Morrison, the interim executive director of the mine society, in a May 26 release.

Nunavut MP Leona Aglukkaq, who also serves as minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, announced the funding May 26.

The money flows from the federal Skills and Partnership Fund, which targets Aboriginal organizations with the goal of improving skills training at the community and regional level.

The same fund has helped to support 80 projects and train more than 6,000 Aboriginal Canadians, the federal government says.

"Our government is helping northerners get the skills and training they need to secure meaningful employment and build better futures for themselves and their families," Aglukkaq said in the same release.

The KMTS will use the money to put Kivalliq residents through local training and southern-based training, to help them access work at mines in the region, including Agnico Eagle's Meadowbank gold mine and the company's second gold project, Meliadine.

In recent years, the mine training society has also made efforts to develop community and family support services for families who have a member who works at a mine.

The KMTS launched sewing groups for spouses of mine workers across the Kivalliq where the organization provides child care and sewing supplies to allow women spouses of mine workers to gather and support each other.

As mining operations ramp up across the territory, the mine society has struggled to secure the funds to stay in operation and relies heavily on federal grants from one year to the next.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_mine_training_society_gets_1.7_million_in_federal_funds/

Aboriginal Politics

Domination and Diversity: Galileo's Lesson for Canada

[Peter d'Errico](#)

5/23/15

Galileo's telescopic observations converted him to the sun-centered view of the planetary system, and thereby made him a target for the Roman Inquisition. The Church was committed to an earth-centered view of the celestial realms. Galileo's deviance from thought patterns prescribed by the Church set the stage for the historic early 17th century clash of world views.

As Dan Hofstadter puts it in his book, *The Earth Moves*, the clash between Galileo and the Church turned on "*seeing* as opposed to the *refusal to see*" [emphasis in original]. Galileo reported what he saw; the Church refused to see.

What has this to do with Indigenous People's rights?

The recent [defeat](#) in the Canadian House of Commons of a bill that would have incorporated the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into the law of Canada demonstrates a similar conflict between "seeing" and "refusal to see."

In the aftermath of the vote, Mark Strahl, a Conservative Party Member of Parliament was [quoted](#) as rejecting any obligation for the Canadian government to obtain "free, prior and informed consent [from Indigenous Peoples] before adopting and implementing legislative or administration measures that may affect them."

Strahl stated, "In the strongest terms, our government rejects this notion.... Our government believes that it was elected to serve the interests of all Canadians and that we should develop and pass legislation and initiatives that are in the public interest of and would benefit all Canadians."

In saying this, the MP *refused to see* that Indigenous Peoples are not actually "Canadians," even though they reside within geographic boundaries claimed by the Canadian state.

The Conservative MP may believe that Aboriginal Peoples have disappeared into the homogenization of Canadian citizenship. He may believe that the Canadian government, created by Christian European colonizers, eliminated the separate, distinctive Aboriginal Peoples and terminated their separate, distinctive histories. These beliefs are the orthodoxy of the Conservative Party in Canada.

The representatives of Aboriginal Peoples challenge those orthodox Canadian beliefs. They *see* the original and continuously existing Aboriginal Peoples.

Romeo Saganash, the Member of Parliament for Nunavik and the New Democratic Party deputy critic for Intergovernmental Aboriginal Affairs, proposed the bill that was defeated. He described the bill as a means for the Canadian government "to engage in genuine partnership with Indigenous peoples." He stated the bill "could bring reconciliation and equivalent rights to Canada's Aboriginal peoples."

The word "partnership" defines a view that Aboriginal Peoples are not simply "Canadians," but occupy a different status. "Reconciliation" calls for the repair of the relationship of partnership that has been damaged or broken. "Equivalent" indicates that neither partner is subordinate to the other. These words describe a perspective that the majority of the Canadian government denied in their votes against the bill.

Back to Galileo: Galileo drew well and was friends with a number of artists. His telescope work dovetailed with his interest in painting and pictorial representation of perspective. He was familiar with the use of frescoed domes in churches to display the official view of the cosmos as earth-centered. In particular, he was aware of the problem of distorted perspective caused by the attempt to portray a cosmos inside a dome.

Hofstadter writes that the church used painted domes with the aim of "countering the spread of the Galilean world picture." The dome, painted with images of stars and planets, presented viewers with an image of an earth-centered cosmos, in keeping with Church doctrine.

The domes, however, presented a serious problem with perspective: the pictures only made sense if the viewer stood at the center. For a moving viewer, the images began to look weird, breaking the illusion.

In an effort to prevent the dome illusion from collapsing, churches tried various means of confining viewers. According to Hofstadter, "the binding of viewers to a fixed point under the dome came to serve as a metaphor for [the Church's] refusal to accept Copernican reasoning." Hofstadter calls this "the perfect visual symbol of a gigantic intellectual self-deception."

Church officials threatened Galileo with torture because he saw movement and said the earth is moving, and thereby gave priority to empirical observation over Church doctrine. Three decades earlier, the Inquisition burned Giordano Bruno at the stake for insisting that the universe consists of an infinite number of moving solar systems.

Hofstadter describes Pope Urban VIII, leader of the Catholic Church at the time of Galileo's trial, as a "chief administrator" and "manager." The pope, says Hofstadter, "legitimately worries that doctrinal chaos is erupting on his watch, and he has no clear view of what is happening." The pope decided that only the Inquisition—the "Holy Office"—could bring matters under control.

Hofstadter describes the Inquisition as "unquestionably a form of mind police... a Christian mind police...aimed not only to discover what the accused was thinking but also to reform his thoughts...to return him, fit for salvation, to the body of the church...."

The central issue in the trial of Galileo was insubordination: the challenge to official church doctrine.

This brings us full circle to the Canadian Parliament and the defeat of the bill that would have brought Canada law in accord with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For the dominant power in the Canadian government, the notion that it must obtain "free and informed consent" from anyone—let alone from Aboriginal Peoples—is heresy. As MP Strahl stated, "In the strongest terms, our government rejects this notion."

The UN Declaration marks a turning point in the history of international relations. After more than 500 years of governments based on the Christian doctrine of "discovery," the world faces a resurgence of Indigenous self-determination. The UN Declaration challenges the sovereignty of "Christian discovery" and threatens the doctrinal stability of governments based on that notion.

This threat, just like Galileo's observations, is rooted in the power of people to see and think for themselves, and especially in the power of Indigenous Peoples to provide different and independent perspectives on the organization of the world's political-economy.

"Free and informed consent" is a heresy from the perspective of governments based on the notion of a single central sovereignty. But from an Indigenous People's perspective, where every homeland is a center and every boundary is a place of fluid and shifting relations with neighbors, "free and informed consent" is a vital part of peaceful resolution of differences among equals.

Jose Barrerio once wrote, "Indigenous is nearly synonymous with diversity." Aboriginal Peoples represent diversity in a world where dominant powers represent central administration. Indigenous self-determination—free and informed consent—represents a way forward in a world increasingly beset by the chaos of competing central powers.

The power of the Canadian government rests on the doctrine of central domination. The power of Aboriginal Peoples rests on the empirical fact of diversity. Canada missed an opportunity to work with the perspective of diversity. Perhaps it will be ready at the next opportunity.

Peter d'Errico graduated from Yale Law School in 1968. He was Staff attorney in Dinebeilna Nahiilna Be Agaditahe Navajo Legal Services, 1968-1970, in Shiprock. He taught Legal Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1970-2002. He is a consulting attorney on indigenous issues.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/23/domination-and-diversity-galileos-lesson-canada>

New Alberta Premier sworn in and reaffirms new relationship building with First Nations

[National News](#) | May 25, 2015 by [Brandi Morin](#) |



(Alberta Premier Rachel Notley is sworn in as the province's 17th premier Sunday. Photo APTN/Brandi Morin)

Brandi Morin

APTN National News

EDMONTON — Rachel Notley was sworn in as the 17th premier of Alberta Sunday afternoon in Edmonton. The New Democratic Party formed a majority government

earlier this month in a historic election that ended the 43 year Progressive Conservative dynasty.

During her campaign, Notley committed to take seriously the government's relationship with Alberta's Aboriginal peoples.

She assured Aboriginal voters that she would address several on-going issues and pledged to make the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples law.

The swearing-in ceremony included Aboriginal content, opening with a blessing from Metis Elder John Macdonald followed by an honour song performed by Rocky Morin from Enoch Cree Nation.

In her speech, Notley announced a new era was unfolding for all Albertans including First Nations.

"And we know that our future is brighter when First Nations can control their destiny and can trust a true partner in government to build a new relationship of respect," she said.



Premier Rachel Notley speaking to approximately 10,000 people gathered to witness the changing of the guard. Photo APTN/Brandi Morin

Speaking from the steps of the Alberta Legislature, Notley announced her 11 cabinet ministers calling them a "lean and efficient" team designed to "get down to work and to deliver results."

"The new members of your legislative assembly embody hope and optimism and they bring rich and diverse experience of Alberta life to this building," said Notley.

Calgary-Buffalo MLA Kathleen Ganley will serve as the new Aboriginal Relations minister while simultaneously serving as Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ganley, a rookie politician and former lawyer specializing in labour and employment law, holds a Bachelor of Sciences in Psychology, a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and a Juris Doctor from the University of Calgary.

Ganley has little experience working with Aboriginal communities but said she is looking forward to her new role.

“We’re incredibly excited to get started and I think there’s going to be a lot to learn in the next little while,” said Ganley.

Alexis Nakota Sioux Chief Tony Alexis attended the ceremony and congratulated Ganley.

“I want to wish Kathleen well and we (First Nations) look forward to working with her,” said Alexis.



L to R: Rocky Morin, Elder Bob Cardinal, Elder Myrtle Calahasen, Elder John Macdonald and Alexis Nakota Chief Tony Alexis at the swearing-in ceremony. Photo APTN/Brandi Morin

“It’s an opportunity to start new ground as the Premier mentioned, it’s a new beginning. We look forward to building some new bridges and some new opportunities for First Nations people are going to be at the table in a very positive way.”

To the cheers and the chants of about 10,000 people who gathered to witness the ceremony, Notley called the day a historic joining together of Albertans in pursuit of a common dream.

“The same dream that has inspired generations of Albertans, a dream founded on the idea that change is possible and that a better future awaits. My friends, it is spring time in Alberta and a fresh wind is blowing,” she ended.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/05/25/new-alberta-premier-sworn-reaffirms-new-relationship-building-first-nations/>

Feds defend First Nations funding cut

By [Stefania Seccia](#), 24 hours

Tuesday, May 26, 2015 5:03:11 PDT PM



Canada's Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt. (REUTERS)

The federal government is removing funding from the First Nations Development Society over concerns with the society's service and program delivery — and it means the 15-year-old society will likely close up shop for good.

Last week, the society confirmed Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada would no longer provide it funding, as of Sept. 30, to distribute on-reserve social assistance programs and provide support for Band Social Development Workers for all 203 bands in B.C.

In an emailed statement, the department says that after two years of meetings to address concerns with the society's service and program delivery — including a client survey — the result was “that the services the society provides would be better delivered by alternative providers.”

As of July 1, the Persons with Disabilities and Monthly Nutritional Supplement Programs will be administered by the non-profit B.C. Aboriginal Network on Disability Society “as they already provide disability client case management services for aboriginal individuals and families.”

“There will be no change in the services and programs provided to band social development workers and income assistance clients as a result of this change,” according to the statement.

“All Income Assistance Policy support services provided to band social development workers, including training, policy clarification services, and the provision of resources and tools, will be transferred to other organizations or managed directly by (AANDC).”

For this fiscal year, the society's funding has been reduced by about \$331,000, according to its president Jamie Hill.

But, in the last client survey ranking the society's overall training delivery, only 7% said it was ‘unsatisfactory.’

“If funding is not reinstated, this may mean the society will wind up operations after Sept. 30,” he said.

Hill said the society was only receiving about two complaints per month, and at the meetings, the federal department was focused on cost savings and “services in B.C. must match other regions in Canada.”

“B.C. has approximately one-third of the bands in Canada and as opposed to other regions, which are mostly treaty, this is not the current reality in B.C., hence the need for our society,” he said.

Hill said they made changes to board leadership and developed a critical action plan to appease the department, but to no avail.

Direct Link: <http://vancouver.24hrs.ca/2015/05/26/feds-defend-first-nations-funding-cut>

Organization hopes to rally the First Nations vote

Sarah Petz

Thursday, May 28, 2015 2:42:52 EDT PM



A grassroots organization is attempting to organize eligible Aboriginal voters ahead of the upcoming federal election in the hopes that Aboriginal issues will be better represented on Parliament Hill.

The organization, Rally the First Nation Vote, is holding a voter registration clinic on Friday at the Sault Ste. Marie Indian Friendship Centre, where eligible voters can register, learn more about the Rally the First Nation Vote initiative, and hear from local First Nations leaders and federal party nominees.

Tyrone Souliere, one of the organizers of the event, said Rally the First Nation Vote believes that if Aboriginal voters were organized, they could affect significant change in Canada. They estimate that within the Robinson Huron Treaty area, which includes 21

First Nations communities and spans from Lake Superior to the Ottawa River, there are up to 30,000 eligible voters, Souliere said.

“We have the numbers in many ridings to deliver the margin of victory in an election. It's just that First Nations people have never been organized in that sense before. Historically, First Nations people have a low voter turnout. so we're working to change that,” he said.

Souliere argued that the Conservative government's cuts to funding for First Nations communities and services highlight the need for Aboriginal voters to get out to the polls.

“All social and economic indicators put First Nations people at the bottom. While the rest of Canada enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the world, First Nations people in a lot of cases are living in third world conditions. Even in terms of clean water, many reserves don't even have clean water,” he said.

“For those reasons, Rally the First Nation vote was formed so that we can organize our votes to vote for the party that will best represent treaty rights, the Charter rights, and Indigenous rights in Parliament.”

The all-day event begins at 10 a.m. with a workshop from Elections Canada on how to register eligible voters, followed by presentations from various speakers in the afternoon.

Direct Link: <http://www.saultstar.com/2015/05/28/organization-hopes-to-rally-the-first-nations-vote>

Legislation to Incorporate U.N. Declaration Into Canadian Law Fails

[ICTMN Staff](#)

5/28/15

Eight years after its ratification, and five years after its official endorsement in Canada, the tenets laid out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples have yet to be implemented down on the ground, indigenous leaders in Canada say.

On April 27, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde delivered a statement at the U.N. Forum on Indigenous Peoples.

“My statement today is a call for Canada and all states to uphold the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to work with Indigenous peoples to ensure all laws are consistent with the Declaration,” Bellegarde said. “It is frankly disturbing that the government of Canada claims that Indigenous rights and Indigenous peoples are a priority at international forums and in front of the international community yet their actions at home are serving to undermine Indigenous rights and peoples.”

This year human rights groups and Indigenous Peoples' organizations called on all countries "to ensure that their laws and policies are consistent with international human rights standards set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," the AFN said.

Pointing out that the U.N. Declaration opens the door for reconciliation, healing, justice and peace, Bellegarde said there was no reason not to take that approach, for the good of all.

"Giving life to its principles will help close the gap in the quality of life between First Nations and Canadians and bring honor to Canada," he said. "Each state has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights, and that includes Indigenous rights."

Not long after that, however, the notion of indigenous rights in Canada took another wallop with the defeat in the House of Commons of a bill introduced by New Democratic Party MP Romeo Saganash, Cree, that would have legislated the adoption of principles based on UNDRIP into the country's laws. Introduced last December, Bill C-641 "would have required the Government of Canada to take all measures necessary to ensure that all Canadian laws are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs would have to prepare an annual report to Parliament reviewing progress in implementing the law," the AFN explained.

"The government of Canada endorsed the UN's Declaration in 2010 and Bill C-641 would have been a step towards finally enshrining the principles set out in the U.N.'s Declaration in the laws of our country," said Saganash, who represents the Abitibi-James Bay-Nunavik-Eeyou

district, in a statement after the May 6 defeat of the bill by the Conservative majority.

"Tonight's vote was an opportunity for the federal government to engage in genuine partnership with Indigenous peoples," he said. "The result of tonight's vote is disappointing. But we take heart in the unity that has grown from this struggle to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The question before Parliament tonight was not a matter of left against right, but right against wrong."

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/28/legislation-incorporate-un-declaration-canadian-law-fails-160523>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Opinion: First Nations want in, meaningfully

By John Jack, Special to the Vancouver Sun May 26, 2015



When the Supreme Court of Canada handed down a land title decision in favour of British Columbia's Tsilhqot'in Nation, aboriginal leaders — Chief Joe Alphonse is tribal chairman of the Tsilhqot'in Nation — celebrated, saying it gives their group a solid legal weapon to remind governments and potential industrial developers of who holds the power.

First Nations are often in the news because they are opposed to resource and industrial development. There was a time when resource industries avoided First Nations for fear of what the First Nations might do to stop things from happening.

All too often, the reasons for opposition have been inadequately portrayed. Dozens of stories confirm how value was generated on First Nations lands without First Nations involvement or benefit.

It is true First Nations leaders stand for environmental protection and preservation but they also stand for principled and sustainable economic development in which their people benefit as well.

First Nations have the same challenges and duties as any other community in B.C. and Canada today. Without being meaningfully involved in realistic economic development projects, the options for any First Nation are severely limited. Leaders are all too aware of the need to reconcile the need for environmental protection with the need for their people to achieve collective and individual progress in life.

If we agree on the notion that capital transfers from the Crown will not suffice in aiding First Nations in their pursuit of self-reliance, we must contemplate what First Nations can do to achieve more independence.

If we agree First Nation's best options lie in economic development, we must address questions of resource development on their lands.

The Tsilhqot'in decision showed in 2014 how to determine aboriginal title and whether provincial laws apply to lands subject to outstanding land claims. Since the ruling, there has been further growth in awareness of the need for businesses to focus on building healthy and productive relationships with First Nations.

First Nations and business leaders realize they probably should work together in creating value from the land and find arrangements that are mutually beneficial. This is how First Nations can best have access to the value created on and from their lands and resources in a meaningful way.

First Nations want in, and they want in meaningfully.

We have an impetus for changing how we, as a society, approach and relate to First Nations peoples, leaders and organizations. All it will take is the will to pick up the phone, meet in the light of day, and truly interact with one-another on equal and respectful terms.

What is the way to build those relationships? Consider what a template could look like going into a post-Tsilhqot'in world. Resource Works, a British Columbia research group, recently released a report entitled *Becoming Partners*, touching on this issue.

The report shows why it is necessary to move away from divisive rhetoric on all sides, and move toward respectfully, realistically conducted province-wide dialogue on the importance of resource development within B.C.

Friction occurs not in economic development itself, but in how development initiatives are conducted. First Nations are too often excluded from involvement.

The path forward lies in building functional and healthy relationships between First Nations and businesses. It will not suffice to simply offer funds for non-interference. Prospective partners need to spend time and effort, alongside other resources, to build understanding and trust at the very beginning to do business together in a way that is compatible with both cultures.

First Nations, with increasingly defined interests in land and resource development, should be involved on the front end of resource development projects. Waiting too long creates uncertainty and ill-will, both of which occur when First Nations are bypassed.

Seeking First Nations involvement in good faith, without being legally coerced to do so, would create the best chance for productive and collaborative relationships.

We can all benefit from principled, sustainable resource development. Let's make sure we do it right, for present and future generations.

John Jack is an elected member of council for the Huu-ayaht First Nations, a director for the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, and tribal representative to the joint HFN-Steelhead LNG governing panel overseeing the Sarita Bay LNG project on Vancouver Island.

Read more:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Opinion+First+Nations+want+meaningfully/11084077/story.html#ixzz3bMC6XCj9>

Merritt-area First Nations ramp up campaign against sewage biosolids

Protest about environmental effects of material trucked to Nicola Valley hits front lawn of B.C. legislature

By Rob Shaw, Vancouver Sun May 26, 2015



Citing environmental concerns, First Nations groups from the Nicola Valley object to sewage biosolids being trucked there from the Lower Mainland and Interior and spread on farmland. Their protest hit the B.C. legislature front lawn Monday.

VICTORIA — First Nations chiefs from the Nicola Valley say they'll continue to blockade roads, occupy government offices and use their own indigenous laws to stop sewage sludge from being dumped on land in Merritt.

Five First Nation chiefs took their protest to the lawn of the B.C. legislature Monday, holding a prayer session over a container of local soil and warning the B.C. government

they would escalate a fight against the application of sewage biosolids on Central Okanagan lands.

“This time, we are not backing down,” said Percy Joe, Shackan Indian Band grand chief. “We have put in place our traditional laws and they will be enforced by whatever means it takes.”

Biosolids — the sludge leftover after the sewage treatment process — from the Fraser Valley and Interior is currently being trucked into a facility in Merritt, where it gets applied on land under permission from the regional government. Some farmers use it as fertilizer.

But some residents have expressed concern that the sludge, which contains heavy metals and pharmaceutical residue, contaminates the land, water, farm animals, food products and marine life.

First Nations groups began blockading the road to the facility three months ago, turning away trucks hauling the waste. In April, they occupied Premier Christy Clark’s constituency office in West Kelowna, staying for several days until the government promised to discuss the issue.

That discussion hasn’t happened, according to Aaron Sam, chief of the Lower Nicola Indian Band.

“When it comes to biosolids, this government ignores and the government completely disregards our rights,” said Sam during Monday’s protest on the legislature front lawn.

“We are here to take care of our water. We are here to take care of our communities and their health and we are here to take care of our children and grandchildren and our future generations.”

The chiefs intended to present the government with a moratorium on the import of biosolids to the Nicola Valley, drafted under their traditional aboriginal laws, said Sam.

Environment Minister Mary Polak met with the chiefs Monday afternoon and said the province is exploring some ideas to address the concerns.

“We’re hopeful we can find a resolution that isn’t going to involve any more blockades or disruptions,” said Polak. She said sewage biosolids is a safe product, used for more than 10 years in the Nicola Valley, and that some ranchers are actually requesting access so they can apply it to their land this year.

Read more:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Merritt+area+First+Nations+ramp+campaign+against+sewage+biosolids/11081943/story.html#ixzz3bMH3XYIf>

B.C. First Nations Chief creates alliance for LNG supporters amid backlash

JUSTINE HUNTER

VICTORIA — The Globe and Mail

Published Tuesday, May. 26 2015, 9:26 PM EDT

Last updated Wednesday, May. 27 2015, 1:21 AM EDT

A group of First Nations communities that supports a liquefied natural gas industry in British Columbia will meet on Wednesday in an effort to forge a pro-development alliance.

Aboriginal leaders who have signed up for benefit-sharing agreements for their communities are facing a strong backlash from other First Nations leaders – often within their own communities.

Over the past month, that opposition has snowballed and the 28 First Nations that have already signed development agreements may find themselves increasingly isolated. Those First Nations chiefs who are still on the fence find themselves in a politically volatile climate.

“Our community’s members are being shunned, they are being treated badly by other First Nations,” said Wet’suwet’en First Nation Chief Karen Ogen, who has invited leaders from 15 First Nations along the line of the proposed Coastal Gas Link pipeline to meet her community. The pipeline project would supply a proposed LNG export facility in Kitimat which is still awaiting a final investment decision.

When Ms. Ogen signed a \$2.8-million agreement with the province last December to support the pipeline, she said the attacks from critics – from neighbouring aboriginal communities as well as hereditary chiefs of the Wet’suwet’en – were strong. Supporters were hard to find. She said only one B.C. chief – there are 203 Indian Act bands in B.C. – publicly supported her community’s decision.

“I think there is a need to support the First Nations that have signed on, so I’m setting up a First Nations-LNG alliance,” Ms. Ogen said. She said she asked for help from the political organizations that represent the province’s First Nations, but there has been no appetite. “If we can’t get the support from the political organizations that supposedly represent us, let’s just do this.”

Since December, the divisions over LNG have heightened. Two weeks ago, the Lax Kw'alaams near Prince Rupert rejected a \$1.1-billion offer to provide consent to a proposed export facility on Lelu Island. The project has support from neighbouring Tsimshian communities but now faces an uncertain future.

The province has sold LNG as a “generational opportunity” that can lift aboriginal communities out of poverty. But the Lax Kw'alaams have been widely praised for their stand against the project, which they fear will harm the critical habitat of juvenile Skeena salmon.

Norman Stephens is a Gitksan hereditary chief who has led protests in his community against natural-gas pipelines that would deliver fuel to LNG facilities on the coast. “I felt great pride to hear the Lax Kw'alaams turned down a billion-dollar deal to protect the salmon,” he said in an interview. “They have made such a noble gesture.”

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, said the concerns raised by Lax Kw'alaams have prompted a reassessment of the impact of LNG. “First Nations are beginning to wake up to the impact a full-scale industry would have on our way of life,” he said. “We are moving away from Yes in the direction of No.”

The Haisla Nation in Kitimat were early adopters of LNG. Chief Councillor Ellis Ross says his community went through the backlash stage several years ago. “We were ahead of the curve,” he said in an interview Tuesday. The Haisla leader said Ms. Ogen is “brave” to stand up against her critics. He said he is sending a delegate to support the Wet'suwet'en in creating an LNG alliance.

“First Nations members are asking for employment, asking for training, asking for a future. And there is no way to deliver unless the First Nations leaders look at some sort of development that impacts the environment,” the chief councillor said. “I’m talking about mining, forestry and LNG.”

Ed John, Grand Chief of the First Nations Summit, said LNG continues to be a topic of debate among aboriginal leaders, but proponents will have to find a way to get to consent or their projects won't move ahead. “You can't focus solely on jobs and damn the environment, that's not going to fly in our communities.”

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/bc-chief-creates-alliance-for-first-nations-lng-supporters/article24634273/>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Conservatives hopeful new Alberta premier will consider major pipeline projects



Published Sunday, May 24, 2015 10:26AM EDT
Last Updated Sunday, May 24, 2015 3:12PM EDT

The Conservative government is hopeful Alberta's newly-elected NDP government will entertain major pipeline projects, despite Premier-Designate Rachel Notley's hesitant language toward some energy projects.

Speaking on CTV's Question Period, Industry Minister James Moore cautioned against concerns that Notley's government may stand in the way of building pipelines.

"To be fair to Premier-Elect Notley, I think that's perhaps a little bit too harsh. I think there's going to be a learning curve in the next little while in the development of a partnership between the federal government and the new government in the province of Alberta.

"I know she hasn't closed the door, for example, on the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the Keystone XL pipeline. Rhetorically, some tough language has been used, but we will see."

During her campaign, Notley said she would not lobby for TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline or Enbridge's Northern Gateway project. Rather, she said she would focus on TransCanada's Energy East pipeline and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline, both of which would carry Alberta crude to the East and West coasts of Canada respectively.

Moore said he is still hopeful that Notley will consider the Keystone pipeline, especially given the "demand" and "need" for energy resources across North America.

"It's not a question of if, it's a question of when," Moore said of Keystone.

After 43 years of Progressive Conservative reign in Alberta, Notley's NDP won a sweeping majority earlier this month. The win shocked the energy sector, having an immediate effect on stocks the day after the election. Even though Notley has promised to work with the energy industry, business leaders are concerned about a potential review of Alberta's oil royalty regime.

Moore hopeful for Petronas LNG project

Moore also said he is hopeful plans to build a \$36-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal on British Columbia's northwest coast will continue to move forward, despite opposition from a local First Nations group.

Malaysian energy giant Petronas signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the B.C. government on the project Wednesday. The MOU comes a week after B.C.'s Lax Kw'alaams band rejected -- for a third time in a row -- a \$1.15-billion deal that would have given consent for the Pacific Northwest LNG project. The band has concerns about the project's effects on the environment and their land rights.

"They're (Petronas) engaging with coastal First Nations to get their consent and to get their comfort for the kind of (terminal) design they have in mind, which would protect coastal waters, protect fish habitat, protect also some of the cultural sensitivities that the Lax Kw'alaams have raised as concerns," said Moore. "Hopefully this can be mitigated and we can move forward."

Speaking with CTV's Question Period last week, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip said the Lax Kw'alaams is firm in its opposition to the project as it stands.

"The message is clear. The aboriginal title and rights interest and everything they represent to the first nations people in British Columbia are not for sale," said Phillip.

Moore said the project proposal is "very challenging" and still requires a lot of work with First Nations. He said the project will face the same scrutiny from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency as other projects have to ensure it strikes the right balance between economic and environmental interests.

According to the B.C. government, Petronas's investment in the pipeline project will be 10 times larger than the current largest private investment ever made in the province. To date, 28 First Nations have signed onto the project, with seven more groups still in negotiations.

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/conservatives-hopeful-new-alberta-premier-will-consider-major-pipeline-projects-1.2388471>

Parks Canada cancels whooping crane tours in Wood Buffalo National Park

Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith Métis Council say they weren't consulted about tours

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 25, 2015 6:30 AM CT Last Updated: May 25, 2015 4:37 PM CT



Biologists in N.W.T.'s Wood Buffalo National Park spotted 202 whooping cranes with a total of 32 young fledglings during an annual summer survey — up from 28 fledglings last year. (Klaus Nigge/Parks Canada/Wood Buffalo National Park)

Parks Canada says there will be no whooping crane tours in May and June of this year, following complaints from aboriginal groups about a lack of consultation.

The tours were listed to begin in Wood Buffalo National Park this week.

Thirty people were supposed to be taking the tours this summer, which cost between \$1,300 and \$3,800.

On Friday, the Salt River First Nation said it planned to [go the federal court for an injunction](#) to stop the tours, which are scheduled to begin today.

Ken Hudson, the president of Fort Smith's Métis Council, says Parks Canada never came to them, either.

Hudson says they have concerns about the altitude of the flights over the park. He says Parks Canada was proposing flight ceilings of about 300 metres for planes and 360 metres for helicopters.

He says he would have liked the opportunity to consult with the Canadian Wildlife Service or the people who monitor the whooping cranes about how the proximity of aircraft could affect wildlife.

"If we consult with them and they advise us that no, that's way too low, we'd get back to Parks and get them to change it before we give it support," says Hudson. "But we weren't given that opportunity."

Hudson says that if First Nations are resorting to injunctions to stop the tours, that shows there's something very wrong with the system.

Salt River Chief Frieda Martselos says she first heard about the plan to offer tours through the media. She says the first time the plan was discussed with Parks was at a meeting in April.

"It is an endangered species," says Martselos.

"It has an effect on the buffalo, also, and all fur-bearing animals because they're going to be landing helicopters just a few kilometres from the nesting area and using blinds. Those are big things. And Parks Canada has a duty to consult Salt River First Nations."

Parks Canada would not agree to an interview. It did issue a statement saying it is committed to engaging with aboriginal groups about the whooping crane experience.

The Parks Canada website still lists flyover tours scheduled for August.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/parks-canada-cancels-whooping-crane-tours-in-wood-buffalo-national-park-1.3085386>

Nunavut Inuit Group Settles Ottawa Lawsuit for \$255.5 Million

[ICTMN Staff](#)

5/25/15

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) and the Canadian government have settled a nine-year-old, copy billion lawsuit brought over alleged failures to implement key components of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) reached in 1993.

The \$255.5 million agreement, reached on March 5, was signed on May 4 as a way of ending the lawsuit, moving forward and compensating Inuit in Nunavut for the breaches, according to the [Nunatsiaq News](#). The lawsuit was first filed in 2006.

Employment training for Inuit will take up copy75 million of the funds, with NTI investing the other \$80.5 million, the *Nunatsiaq News* said. The settlement was reached just before a March trial would have started.

“This is an historic moment for Inuit,” said NTI President Cathy Towtongie in a [statement at the signing](#). “NTI and Inuit now have prospects for a restored and more productive partnership. NTI hopes that this settlement agreement will open a new chapter in our relationship with the Government of Canada and the GN, and that Inuit will be able to further take advantage of the promises contained in the NLCA.”

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Bernard Valcourt admitted the government had “dropped the ball” in 2003 in failing to renew a 10-year implementation contract for the agreement, the [Nunatsiaq News](#) said.

The lawsuit had centered around the section of the NLCA pertaining to Article 23, which mandates affirmative action programs and other measures to enable Inuit to work in government, the *Nunatsiaq News* explained. This was to be in effect until the proportion of Inuit working in government was the same—85 percent—as that in the general Nunavut population. Though money had been spent to that end from 1993 to 1999, NTI claimed that once Nunavut Territory was officially created on April 1, 1999, the money stopped flowing.

Among other changes, the settlement creates a new type of dispute resolution process, NTI said in a statement, as well as new contracting measures that will enable the hiring of more Inuit in government roles. In addition, Ottawa will spend \$50 million above and beyond the \$255.5 million settlement amount to pay for training programs for Inuit over the next eight years, the *Nunatsiaq News* said. That includes conducting a labor force analysis.

“Our government remains focused on jobs, growth and economic prosperity for all Canadians,” said Valcourt in the NTI statement. “Today’s signing ceremony is a clear demonstration of our government’s commitment to moving forward and working with our partners to implement the [Nunavut Land Claims Agreement](#) so that ultimately, we can unlock new economic opportunities and create jobs for Nunavummiut.”

“We are pleased the settlement has been finalized, and are committed to working with NTI in advancing initiatives that further support training of Inuit within the GN Public Service, as outlined in Article 23 of the NLCA,” said Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna, who signed the agreement along with Towtongie and Valcourt.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/25/nunavut-inuit-group-settles-ottawa-lawsuit-2555-million-160482>

More First Nations join Peel River watershed appeal

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Gwich'in Tribal Council will speak to appeal court

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 26, 2015 7:55 AM CT Last Updated: May 26, 2015 7:58 AM CT



The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Gwich'in Tribal Council have joined the fight for the Peel River watershed, registering as interveners in appeal court. (Juri Peepre)

Two additional First Nations have joined the legal battle against the Yukon government and its land use plans for the Peel River watershed.



The logos of the Vuntut Gwitchin and Gwich'in Tribal Council. (CBC)

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, based in Old Crow, Yukon, and the Gwich'in Tribal Council, based in the Mackenzie Delta region of the Northwest Territories, have been granted status to speak to an appeal court.

[In 2014 the Supreme Court of Yukon ruled in favour](#) of the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, saying the Yukon government had failed to respect the terms of a consultation process.

The Yukon government [is appealing the case](#).

Yukon premier says appeal will continue

The First Nations' statements were discussed May 25 in Yukon's legislative assembly. The territory's Liberal leader, Sandy Silver, asked the Premier if the government would now drop its appeal.

Pasloski said the appeal is unchanged.



Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski said Monday in the legislative assembly that the government would not drop its appeal, saying "our legal advice was that we had a strong case." (Philippe Morin/CBC)

"Our legal advice was that we had a strong case for appeal. Nevertheless we went to the First Nations to pursue an out-of-court arrangement that everybody could live with. We did this because our government would prefer an out-of-court decision on this issue. However, First Nations were not interested in a out-of-court arrangement," he said.

The premier added the appeal's goal is to "achieve clarity on the land-use planning process and assurance that democratically-elected, public governments have final say over what happens on public land."

Silver pressed the government on the cost of the appeal.

The premier did not provide an estimate.

"As premier, I spoke to the chiefs of the First Nations. Our lawyers spoke to the First Nation lawyers and our government staff spoke with First Nations staff. In all cases, the answer to our offer was no," Pasloski said.

Neither side in favour of third intervener

The Yukon Court of Appeal is also considering an application from a third intervener.

The Yukon Land Use Planning Council, which prepared the original land use plan for the Peel watershed, has also asked to appear before the appeal court.

George Nassiopoulis, who is with the Council, says they can assist with interpreting facts of the case.

"We're not here to support or affect any decision of the lower court," says Nassiopoulis. "We're not here to pick sides. We're just here to get clarification on the role of Council."

Both sides in the fight oppose the Planning Council's presence in the appeal court, with the Yukon government and the coalition of First Nations and environmental groups both saying it will be a distraction.

The court says it will rule on the Council's application within two weeks.

The Yukon Court of Appeal will hear the case in August.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/more-first-nations-join-peel-river-watershed-appeal-1.3087305>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

'Start in our own house:' Loretta Saunders' death inspires Saint Mary's aboriginal task force

By [Haley Ryan](#) Metro, May 21, 2015



A vigil is held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Wednesday, March 5, 2014, for Loretta Saunders and to call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Just over a year after her murder, Loretta Saunders' legacy has created change for aboriginal students at Saint Mary's University.

Saunders attended Saint Mary's while working on her thesis about missing and murdered aboriginal women for her honour's sociology degree, and on Thursday the Halifax school released their President's Task Force Report on Aboriginal Students that includes 17 recommendations.

Dr. Peter Twohig chaired the task force and said Saunders' murder last February caused the school to reflect on what programs and supports were available to aboriginal students.

"Educational institutions are an important part of the colonial context," Twohig, a professor of history, and Atlantic Canada studies said Thursday.

"If we really want to begin to have transformational change, now's the time to start and we should start in our own house."

Saint Mary's outgoing president, Dr. Colin Dodds, had called for the task force in April and received their report in September, Twohig said.

The school has already acted on two recommendations by allotting funding to hire a full-time aboriginal student advisor, and establishing an Aboriginal Advisory Council that will review and decide how to roll out the other points in the report.

From there, Twohig said it's especially important to set up an Aboriginal Student Centre not only as a place for studying, but somewhere young people can feel comfortable and engage in cultural practices or have access to aboriginal mentors and staff.

Other recommendations include appointing an university elder or elder-in-residence who would provide spiritual and practical support, creating an University Chair in Indigenous Studies, increasing outreach activities to bring younger aboriginal people on campus,

acknowledging SMU's spot in the Mi'kma'ki region through campus signs and flying the Mi'kmaq flag outside the McNally Building, and developing courses more relevant to the aboriginal community.

"We're not just talking about courses on the political science ... or history of aboriginal communities," Twohig said.

"Maybe courses in Sobey's school that could talk about entrepreneurialism in a reserve context ... indigenous science and indigenous ecology."

Increasing the number of professors, experts and visiting speakers from an aboriginal background is important so students can see themselves reflected, Twohig said, which goes for African Nova Scotian or international students as well.

"That can often be a source of inspiration or at least a beginning point for dialogue, and I think it's a wonderful thing," he said.

Direct Link: <http://metronews.ca/news/halifax/1374792/start-in-our-own-house-loretta-saunders-death-inspires-saint-marys-aboriginal-task-force/>

Teresa Robinson's community continues search for her remains

11-year-old girl's death being treated as a homicide after partial remains found over 2 weeks ago

By Connie Walker, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 21, 2015 7:33 PM ET Last Updated: May 23, 2015 9:57 AM ET



The death of Teresa Robinson, 11, is being investigated as a homicide. (Facebook)

Members of Garden Hill First Nation are grieving over the death of 11-year-old Teresa Robinson while still conducting daily searches for her partial remains.

Hundreds of volunteers have joined the search of the heavily wooded areas around the northern Manitoba community over two weeks after remains were first found.

"They are still going to go search every day," said community member Ron Monias yesterday. "They are having a prayer walk today and they are going to light up a sacred fire for four days representing the four directions."

Community members originally believed Robinson was attacked by a wild animal, but on Friday, RCMP announced they are treating her death as a homicide.



Sandra Robinson, mother of 11-year-old Teresa Robinson, is surrounded by family at a prayer walk for her daughter. (Ron Monias)

"It's very, very hard," said Monias. "Everybody is affected by it, the young kids, the middle generation and the old people. Everybody is just pulling together for each other."

The girl was reported missing to RCMP on May 11 and a community searcher found partial remains later that day. An autopsy was performed last Wednesday. RCMP said they have not been able to positively identify the body, but they believe it is Robinson's.

She was last seen after attending a birthday party in the community on May 5.

Other First Nations join search

Several First Nations communities from across northern Manitoba and Ontario have travelled to the remote community to join the search.

"All First Nations people are like that. They are caring people and they will do what they can to help others," said Monias. "That's just the way we are. That's why so many other communities have come over. We're happy to have them."

Yesterday, Teresa's family members took part in a prayer walk in the community. It's one of several vigils held in communities across the province since the girl's death.

Prayer walk for Teresa Robinson1:28

"It has been the most difficult thing that this family has ever had to face, and the overwhelming support by surrounding communities and from all across the nation certainly is appreciated," said elder Eliza Beardy who attended a vigil held in Winnipeg on Monday.

Monias said a curfew has been in place in Garden Hill since the girl's death. "Everyone is hurt. And everyone has to recover. We want to heal as a community."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/teresa-robinson-s-community-continues-search-for-her-remains-1.3082771>

Special Topic: Residential Schools

Lost generations

The dark past and hopeful future of Canada's indigenous populations

In the 1840s, the Canadian government established the Indian Residential School system, a network of church-run boarding schools created to forcibly assimilate indigenous children into the dominant culture of Canada.

The children who attended these facilities — coming from First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities — were punished for speaking their native languages or observing indigenous traditions. They were routinely physically and sexually abused, both by the teachers who ran the schools and by older students who had typically been assaulted themselves. In some extreme instances, students were subjected to medical experimentation and sterilization by teachers and school administrators.

The last residential school didn't close until 1996. The Canadian government issued its [first formal apology](#) in 2008.

Still, the lasting impact on Canada's indigenous populations is immeasurable. At least [4,000 children died](#) while in the system — so many that it became common for residential schools to have their own cemeteries.

Those who did survive, deprived of their families and their own cultural identities, became part of a series of lost generations. Languages died out; sacred ceremonies were suppressed and even criminalized. First Nations elders have called the residential school system's practices a cultural genocide.



Tyler Eagle, Waswanipi First Nation

Paired with sweetgrass, one of the four sacred plants (cedar, sage and tobacco are the other three) used in First Nations rituals and ceremonies.

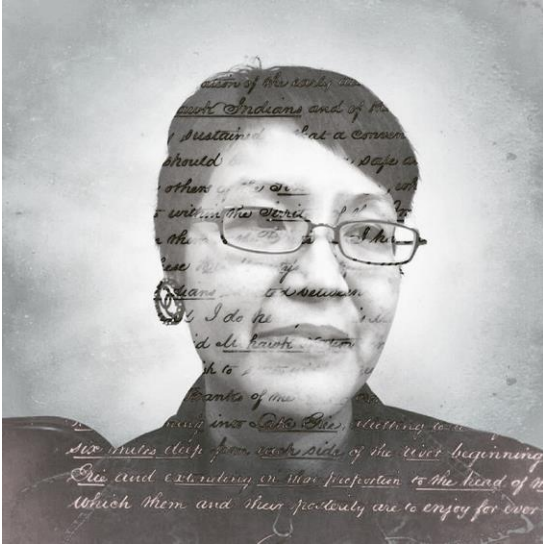
In the fall of 2014, I spent a month documenting the school system's terrible legacy through photography. Much of this project focuses on the literal impact of what it means to lose one's identity. A [disproportionate number](#) of residential school survivors and their immediate families struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and substance abuse. First Nations peoples are also excessively marginalized in the public health system, and at least [1,200 aboriginal women](#) have been reported missing or murdered over the past 30 years, further highlighting the well-being gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

The social injustices that continue to affect Canada's native populations need to be recorded and shared in order to prompt change.

But one of the many problems with images depicting drug use, alcoholism and poverty is that they can do more to shame and stigmatize the subjects than shed light on the sources of their suffering. In an attempt to overcome that challenge, I created multiple-exposure portraits to look at the causes, rather than the effects.

I paired individuals with sites where residential schools once stood, government documents that enforced strategic assimilation and places where First Nations peoples now struggle to persevere. Each double exposure contains an echo of trauma, which lingers even during the healing process, as languages and traditions return.

Most importantly, these images are meant to not only reveal the past, but also to look to the future — one in which Canada's indigenous peoples can hopefully find peace.



Crystal Lavallee, Cree and Ojibwe

Paired with the Haldimand Proclamation, a treaty granting land to the Six Nations (Iroquois) for having fought with the British in the American Revolution. Today, Six Nations is the largest band in Canada.



Rodney Little Mustache, Piikani Nation

Paired with the sacred fire from a sweat lodge in Saskatchewan.



Suzanne Smoke, Alderville First Nation

Paired with birds sitting on a telephone wire near Alderville First Nation in Ontario.

The Canadian government doesn't understand why our people are lost. They want reconciliation? My idea of reconciliation is to build another school with our longhouse traditions. Bring back our culture. Bring back our language. Acknowledge our history.
Eugene Harry, Malahat First Nation



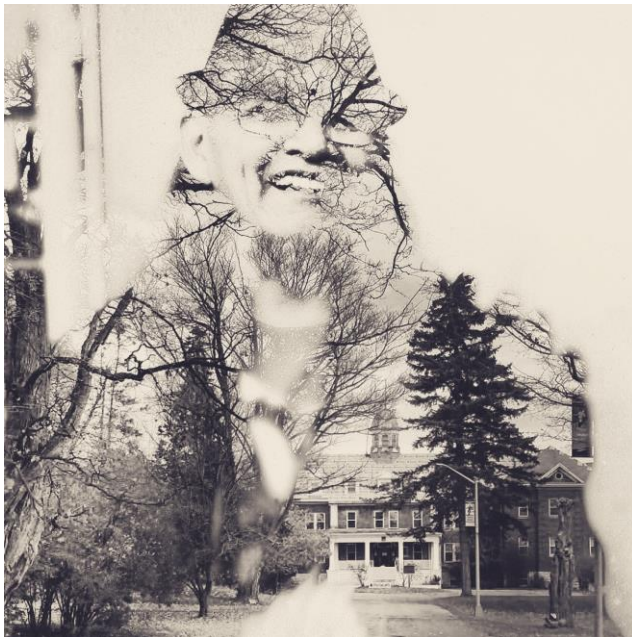
Archie Weenie, Sweetgrass First Nation

Paired with clouds just off Canada's east coast.



Graham Paradis, Ojibwe and Métis

A letter from the Department of Indian Affairs, dated Dec. 15, 1921, that starts, "Sir — It is observed with alarm that the holding of dances by the Indians on their reserves is on the increase, and that these practices tend to disorganize the efforts which the Department is putting forth to make them self-supporting. I have, therefore, to direct you to use your utmost endeavours to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing. You should suppress any dances which cause waste of time, interfere with the occupation of the Indians, unsettle them for serious work, injure their health or encourage them in sloth and idleness."



Eugene Harry, Malahat First Nation

Paired with the Mohawk Institute Residential School, one of the few original school structures remaining.



Doreen Bellaire, Nipissing First Nation

Paired with a view of North Bay, Ontario, the town adjoining the Nipissing First Nation.

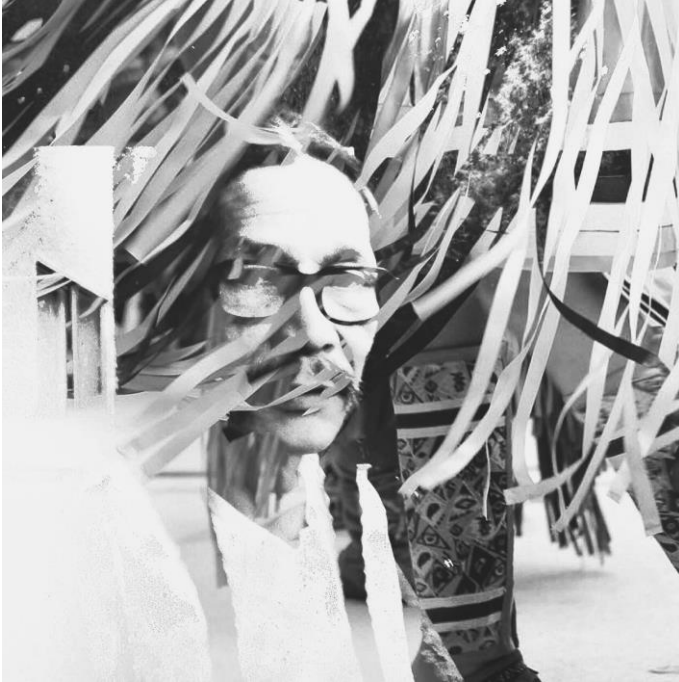
'You stupid Indian' were the first English words I ever learned. It became self-fulfilling.
My identity was held against me.

TOM JANVIER, DENE SULINÉ



Ellie Kay, Cree and Sioux

Paired with the Pacific Spirit Regional Park, which is still claimed by the Musqueam Indian Band.



Tom Janvier, Dene Suliné

Paired with traditional jingle dancers performing at the monthly Alderville Drum Social.

Our languages are coming back. Our songs are coming back. But not everything is returning — some things have been lost forever. That's the price of our ancestors being forced to assimilate.

Graham Paradis, Ojibwe and Métis

This work was supported by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

Direct Link: <http://mashable.com/2015/05/22/canadian-indigenous-peoples/>

Teachings about aboriginals 'simply wrong', says Murray Sinclair

[Mark Kennedy, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: May 24, 2015

Last Updated: May 24, 2015 8:38 PM EDT



Justice Murray Sinclair, head of the aboriginal residential schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission, says one of the most important messages that will come from his report is that the consequences of the school system are far more wide-reaching than many realize.

Canadians must acknowledge that for generations their public schools have fed them misinformation about aboriginal people, says the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Justice Murray Sinclair, whose commission has examined the history and abuses that took place in Indian residential schools, made the comment in a personal interview with the Citizen.

Sinclair's commission has finished six years of hearings and research and will publicly release its findings in Ottawa on June 2.

The TRC's report will provide a detailed account of how 150,000 aboriginals were stripped from their families starting in the 1880s and sent to church-run schools established by the federal government. The last residential school closed in the 1990s.

The report will chronicle the abuse many faced, and how the system scarred several generations of aboriginals, leaving their communities in shambles.

But Sinclair emphasized that one of the most important messages that will come from the report is that the consequences of the school system are far more wide-reaching than many realize.

"This is not an aboriginal problem," he said. "This is a Canadian problem. Because at the same time that aboriginal people were being demeaned in the schools and their culture and language were being taken away from them and they were being told that they were inferior, they were pagans, that they were heathens and savages and that they were unworthy of being respected — that very same message was being given to the non-aboriginal children in the public schools as well."

As a result, he said, many generations of non-aboriginal Canadians have had their perceptions of aboriginal people “tainted.”

“They need to know that this history includes them,” Sinclair said of Canadians.

He said many people have told the commission they did not know their country had set up a school system that treated aboriginal children so poorly.

Sinclair said the commission decided during its work that it needed to be “gentle” with Canadians as they learned of their country’s past.

“We needed to be sure that people were brought to the table of knowledge about this in a way that didn’t scare them, didn’t push them away, didn’t make them feel ashamed or guilty or that they were to blame.

“But they needed to see that they were victims, too, of this history.”

In their report, Sinclair and his co-commissioners, former journalist Marie Wilson and Alberta Chief Willie Littlechild, will make recommendations to federal and provincial governments. It’s clear one of them will be to ensure schools teach children about the residential schools and indigenous culture.

“By including teaching around residential schools in Canadian curriculum,” said Sinclair, “we are not only opening the door to having aboriginal people become part of the circle, we are also opening the eyes of Canadians to the fact that they have been educated in the public schools about aboriginals historically, and even today, in (a way) that is simply wrong and doesn’t contain accurate information.”

Sinclair’s commission was established as part of a class-action lawsuit settlement between residential school students and the federal government and churches.

In addition to telling the truth behind the school saga, the commission hopes to foster reconciliation between Canada’s aboriginals and non-aboriginals.

“The message for all Canadians is it’s important for us to understand that it’s now time for us to live up to the reputation that we think we had, that we thought we had — and we don’t have,” he said.

“It’s important for us to understand that we have deluded ourselves as a country to a certain extent because we have not educated ourselves about this experience.”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which heard testimony from more than 7,000 former residential school students, has helped shine a light on their experiences.

Sinclair said that now that those stories about “damaged” people have been told and it is clear that “Canada is responsible for that damage,” it’s time for aboriginals and non-aboriginals to forge a better relationship.

“This is about your grandchildren,” Sinclair said he often tells people.

“Because we’re leaving them this society. And do we want to leave them a society in which they are always in conflict? Or do we want to leave them a society in which they see themselves as partners in this wonderful nation that we want to have, but we don’t yet have.”

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/teachings-about-aboriginals-simply-wrong-says-murray-sinclair>

Woman holding sacred ceremony on Victoria Island vows not to leave

Truth and Reconciliation Commission has priority on island starting Monday, NCC says

[CBC News](#) Posted: May 24, 2015 11:25 AM ET Last Updated: May 24, 2015 12:09 PM ET



Susan Martin has been conducting a sacred ceremony on Victoria Island on the Ottawa River for nearly a month in honour of missing and murdered aboriginal women. (CBC News)

An Ottawa-area woman says the National Capital Commission will have to have her arrested if it wants her to leave the camp site where she's been holding a sacred ceremony in honour of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Susan Martin has been keeping a sacred fire at the site on Victoria Island, located on the Ottawa River, for 29 days.



Martin's daughter, Terrie Ann Dauphinais, was found murdered in her home in Calgary in 2002. Her case remains unsolved. (CBC News)

Martin lives with her husband only 10 minutes away from the camp site. Her decision to hold a ceremony was also inspired by the death of her own daughter.

In April 2002, 24-year-old Terrie Ann Dauphinais was found dead on the floor of her Calgary home when a relative stopped by to visit.

[The homicide, now a cold case, remains unsolved.](#)

"I was suicidal. I was suicidal for a long time," Martin said. "After four years I couldn't take the pain anymore. And I went away, and I worked with a shaman and two elders up by Heron Lake to get me back.

"I'll never be that woman I was 13 years ago," she said. "I'm an advocate. I speak for the murdered and missing women."

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The National Capital Commission said that starting Monday, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has priority over the island.

'I know what I'm doing is right.'- *Susan Martin*

For years, the commission has toured the country to hear from Indian residential school survivors. [The commission is taking over the area to set up for its closing ceremonies slated to run from May 31 to June 3.](#)

Martin said an NCC employee showed up on Friday and told her she had four hours to leave. Martin refused.

On Saturday, the NCC sent its aboriginal liaison to the island to explain the NCC's position to Martin.

"I want them to have their ceremony. That's a great cause and they need to close it in a proper fashion," Martin said.

"But this is also a great cause, too. I can't see why we can't coincide together. ... I'm going to talk to the elder and see if he agrees."

Martin said the only way she's leaving is in handcuffs.

"I know what I'm doing is right. No one has that right to take that away from any of us," she said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/woman-holding-sacred-ceremony-on-victoria-island-vows-not-to-leave-1.3085568>

Archbishop urges penance for mistreatment of aboriginal children at residential schools

[Mark Kennedy, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: May 26, 2015

Last Updated: May 26, 2015 6:41 PM EDT



Catholic Archbishop Terrence Prendergast wants reconciliation with the victims of residential school abuses.

The Catholic Archbishop of Ottawa is calling on followers of the faith to “repent” and seek forgiveness for how the church mistreated thousands of aboriginal children in residential schools for many decades.

The message is contained in a pastoral letter written by Archbishop Terrence Prendergast and comes just days before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) releases the findings of its six-year probe into this controversial chapter of Canadian history.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has publicly released Prendergast's letter as part of its efforts to support and pray for residential school survivors, and reconcile with them.

Meanwhile, the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches – which were also involved in the school system – are gearing up for next week's TRC release with plans to forge "reconciliation" activities.

In his letter, Prendergast invites Catholics "to reflect on the importance of Canada's First Peoples and to repent with me for how the Church has at times mistreated them."

"In particular, I ask that you act in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples over the offences of residential schools and join me in prayer for reconciliation."

Prendergast describes the schools as a "dark period in the Church's history."

"The schools were part of a policy of cultural assimilation of Aboriginal peoples, and over the decades, much abuse took place at these schools. Most of these residential schools were operated by Catholic entities and we recognize a moral responsibility and obligation to repent of this wrongdoing."

The archbishop writes that when the TRC begins four days of events in the National Capital Region this Sunday to cap off its work, church bells will ring across Canada at noon local time.

"We face the past and sincerely ask for forgiveness. Your awareness of this history, your presence at events, and your prayers will help the Church express its genuine desire to work with Aboriginal communities to build a shared future of mutual respect."

[The residential schools saga is one of Canada's biggest untold stories.](#) The schools were established and funded by the federal government and run by the churches.

Beginning in the 1880s, more than 150,000 aboriginal children were torn from their families and sent to about 130 residential schools that, in many cases, resembled violent prisons. Seven generations of children were scarred by physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

For most of the school year, they were not raised by their parents, which meant they never learned how to become parents themselves. The intergenerational fallout was shattering and the effects are still felt today. The last school didn't close until 1996.

The residential school survivors sued the federal government and churches. That lawsuit led to a court settlement in 2007 that issued compensation payments for former students, and established the TRC to tell the story of the schools.

The TRC initially dissolved in a spat involving its first three commissioners, who were replaced in 2009 by [Manitoba Justice Murray Sinclair \(its chairman\)](#), and former journalist Marie Wilson and Alberta Chief Wilton Littlechild.

They heard from more than 7,000 witnesses and went to court to force the federal government to release archival documents on the schools.

Next Tuesday, the commissioners will release an executive summary of their findings, with recommendations. The full, six-volume report will be released later in the year.

It's now clear that church leaders are keen to make amends for past wrongs.

The Anglican Church of Canada, headed by Archbishop Fred Hiltz, is calling on its followers to join in 22 days of "prayer and renewal" – following this Sunday's TRC events, and leading up to the annual National Aboriginal Day on June 21.

On its website, the Anglican church says that testimony of school survivors at the TRC exposed a "horrible truth" of what happened to them.

To this day, says the church, the legacy of the schools endures through the high numbers of indigenous children in foster care, shortened life spans, and high rates of violence.

"Our church had a century-long history of working with the government to run more than 30 residential schools for indigenous children. Though individual participants may have had nobler intentions, the underlying colonial aim was to break indigenous cultures, and to assimilate the children into the bottom rungs of a hierarchical society.

"Doing that, we destroyed families and communities, and drove students and their parents, siblings, and children into dysfunction and addiction. Many were also sexually abused."

The Anglican church says it recognized its "wrongdoing" and withdrew from running the schools in 1969.

"It took us another quarter century to apologize to former students and their families. We've been trying to live into that apology ever since, pushing for justice, healing and reconciliation."

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/catholic-archbishop-repents-for-mistreatment-of-aboriginal-children-at-residential-schools>

Stephen Harper urged to show leadership on residential schools

[Mark Kennedy, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: May 27, 2015

Last Updated: May 27, 2015 8:10 PM EDT



A photo of First Nations children at the St. Mary's Residential school (near Mission, B.C.) (date unknown)

Opposition party leaders are calling on Prime Minister Stephen Harper to show personal “leadership” in his government’s public response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) next week.

But it’s unclear if Harper will even participate in the closing events for the six-year probe of the aboriginal residential school system.

Harper’s involvement is considered important because he was the political leader who delivered a historic apology in the House of Commons in 2008 for the federal government’s role in the residential school saga.

Now, he will be faced with responding to recommendations from the commission that will tell the brutal truth of how 150,000 aboriginal children were stripped from their families for many decades by the federal government and sent to church-run schools where many suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Starting Sunday, the TRC will hold four days of events in Ottawa to mark the end of its work. Leaders of aboriginal organizations, churches and ecumenical groups will participate throughout.

Details of the federal participation haven’t been publicly disclosed, although it’s expected Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt will play a prominent role.

On Wednesday, Stephen Lecce, Harper’s director of media relations, noted that the prime minister had “offered a historic apology” on behalf of all Canadians to residential school students.

“The Prime Minister intends to mark the closing events next week,” said Lecce. But it was unclear whether that meant he would personally show up at the TRC events.

On Wednesday, NDP leader Tom Mulcair said Harper acted properly when he rose in the Commons on June 11, 2008.

“Even though we are political adversaries, I think that it’s only fair to say that it was one of the best moments of Mr. Harper in those nine and a half years – when he called Parliament together to give an apology for the residential schools tragedy.

“We made an important admission that day that it was the fault of the federal government, and that’s why we offered an apology,” said Mulcair.

The NDP leader suggested that Harper’s words would be meaningless if they are not followed up with real action to foster a better relationship with aboriginal people.

“You have to remember why you have apologized. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be releasing a report. I don’t think it’s going to be kind with regard to what’s happened since that apology.”

Since 2008, relations with Canada’s First Nations have steadily gone sour – with the rise of the grassroots Idle No More movement, and bitter disagreement between the Conservative government and aboriginals over issues ranging from education to resource development.

“A prime minister worthy of the name is going to have to understand the importance of developing a respectful nation-to-nation relationship with our First peoples. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have failed completely on that front.”

Liberal leader Justin Trudeau also said Harper’s 2008 apology was an “important moment,” but he added that next week’s TRC report could be just as momentous.

“What Canadians are going to be reminded of when this report comes out – 150,000 children whose lives were ruined by the actions of the state – is going to be an extremely important moment for how we look at ourselves as a country,” said Trudeau.

Trudeau said it’s critical the federal government works with all Canadians to “bring a measure of peace” to the remaining 80,000 residential school “survivors” and their families.

“I think there should be as much political presence and leadership as possible. This is something that goes beyond any political party.

“I’d like to see the prime minister involved.”

The TRC heard from more than 7,000 witnesses and went to court to force the federal government to release archival documents on the schools.

On Tuesday, the commissioners will release an executive summary of their findings. Later that day, there will be responses from the federal government, former students, aboriginal groups and churches.

There will be a closing ceremony Wednesday at Rideau Hall.

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/stephen-harper-urged-to-show-leadership-on-residential-schools>

Did Canada hear its residential school survivors?

By

[Natalie Robinson](#)

| May 28, 2015



Next week will mark the end of government funding to investigate the truth and impact of residential schools through the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) (TRC). The TRC's goals were to educate Canadians about this dark part of our history and support the healing of residential school survivors.

Do Canadians now understand their complicity in First Nations' health and social challenges? Are we ready to accept that the abuse First Nations suffered at the hands of our government continues to debilitate their communities?

Patrick Etherington, Sr. and five other people from grassroots action [TRC Walkers](#) left Cree Territory, Cochrane, Ontario on April 8 and have made their way to Ottawa, on foot, for the final TRC report next week.

To bear witness to other TRC reports, members of this same group walked to Winnipeg and Halifax. This time, the Walkers made it to Toronto on Mother's Day weekend, a sad irony for those who had been taken from their mothers as children. Then, the TRC

Walkers passed through Peterborough as Canadians celebrated the birthday of colonialist Queen Victoria.

The TRC Walkers see their journey as the ceremonial counterpart to the TRC, but it's also intended to build awareness. Etherington wants Canadians to hear what it was like for First Nations children to be taken from their families, as part of a 150-year effort to eradicate First Nations culture.

The last residential school closed in the mid-1990s, meaning, the Canadian government has committed acts of genocide in recent history, to use the words of TRC Chair, Justice Murray Sinclair.

In 2008, the Prime Minister admitted the government had made an error in trying to wipe out First Nations traditions. The TRC was created as an official container for the testimony of residential school survivors.

However, Etherington alleges that this process was short-lived and shallow given the lingering impacts that weaken First Nations communities.

The TRC ends June 3, but the problems created by residential schools loom larger than ever and this is just the beginning for reconciliation.

Parenting disrupted for 150 years

Every culture has its own traditions around nurturing families and the governance of communities. For Canada's First Nations, these traditions were purposely disrupted for multiple generations by the federal government.

When average Canadians say they don't understand why First Nations can't "get it together," consider the fact that people who were taken from their families, institutionalized and abused generally have a harder time with parenting and other forms of leadership. "Intergenerational effects" thread their way painfully through survivors' families.

Etherington points out that the Children's Aid Society is taking First Nations children into their care at greater rates now than at the height of the Residential School Era.

"What was done to the survivors, how they were taken away from their humanity, themselves. They were on survival mode from that time on. Something happened within the context of creating the human being, being almost like a robot in the situation, how it was done... A young child needs the mother and father, that relationship with substance, also identity, ethical values and understanding of our homeland. And that disturbance causes that child to become someone else," says Etherington.

Etherington's message is that the public needs to be educated and to hear survivors' descriptions of what was lost.

"That's how the story of the Indian Residential School has to be focused on. Not just to focus on how the government is going to create [the Truth and Reconciliation Commission]... Truth is one part but towards reconciliation is a bigger process. And it's in a different process and that process needs to be created with more meaning to it and all the elements that come with it. One element is treaty and another is education."

From victimhood to leadership

It was his father, Etherington says, who inspired him "to step away from the pain and the victim place." He then felt guided to coordinate a ceremonial counterpart to the TRC as a group whose mandate wouldn't end with the government funding. The TRC Walkers have prepared, spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically for next week's report. They'll make sure the fire is lit and the teachings are shared because they feel a responsibility to support the healing of their communities.

Both Etherington and TRC Chair Sinclair suggest First Nations experiences, historically and currently, need to be part of all Canadians' education; our understanding of Canada is incomplete until we hear from First Nations, in their own words, and acknowledge their reality today.

On-reserve First Nations continue to receive less money per capita for basic services than the rest of Canada, keeping them trapped in poverty. The disappearance of hundreds of First Nations women is not unrelated to the history of abuse that began in residential schools.

Taken together, these issues represent a national crisis, acknowledged even within the UN. The response must begin with listening to the solutions that are being proposed by the survivors themselves.

The TRC Walkers are [collecting donations on the GoFundMe](#) to support the logistics of their walk. This means the helpers. Etherington explains that when beginning a ceremony, they always call in the helpers. On this walk, they are being the helpers, supporting healing for residential school survivors.

Natalie Robinson is a community organizer in rural Ontario. She has a weekly column in the Pembroke Daily Observer called "Your Mama's Economics" and, in the past, she was a guest blogger for Corporate Knights. Natalie recently co-founded Homespun, an organization devoted to DIY economic development and collaborative marketing for small business. Prior to that she designed the Sustainability Education program for Algonquin College while completing an MA in Environmental Education and Communication.

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/news/2015/05/did-canada-hear-its-residential-school-survivors>

A question of genocide

For many, that word is associated with death camps and Nazi killing units, but what about Canada's tragic treatment of First Nations?

by [Bernie Farber](#)

May 27, 2015
8:20 PM

Earlier this month I had an opportunity to visit the Curve Lake reserve north of Peterborough.

There, at the Whetung Ojibwa Gallery, where some of the finest examples of aboriginal art can be viewed and purchased, I met First Nations artist Freddy Taylor.

His powerful works are a testament to the pain and suffering he endured while a "student" at the Mohawk Institute, a residential school near Brantford, the site today of the Woodland Cultural Centre.

Taylor was only six when a federal Indian agent enticed him into his truck with an offer of food and kidnapped him from his parents and community. He didn't even have a chance to say goodbye. It was 1951.

He told me of his experiences at the residential school. "They gave me the number 39, and that was my identity for the next 10 years," he says. "I was beaten if I used my name or spoke of my parents or cried."

Like so many others, Taylor was abused and fed a minimal diet that had him and others sneaking out to the town dump to scrounge for food.

"All I remember is that I was hungry all the time," he says.

For many, the word "genocide" is associated with images of death camps and Nazi killing units. The question of First Nations genocide is frequently ignored. Is Canada guilty of having committed genocide against First Nations people?

In a debate marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Canada's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald, at Queen's University earlier this year, the question arose. Bob Rae, debating Citizenship and Immigration Minister Chris Alexander, noted that "the

destruction of a people and the destruction of a culture fits the United Nations' definition of genocide. And having said that, we have to deal with the consequences."

It is not difficult to follow Rae's logic.

Professor James Daschuk of the University of Regina in his seminal work *Clearing The Plains: Disease, Politics Of Starvation And The Loss Of Aboriginal Life* accuses John A. of "outright malevolence" for crafting legislation that starved Plains Indians into submission, forcing them to vacate their traditional territories to make way for Macdonald's railroad. Thousands died of malnutrition because of a policy that Daschuk concludes was "a form of ethnic cleansing and genocide."

Residential schools established as early as 1870 took as their mission to "kill the Indian in the child." Upwards of 150,000 First Nations, Metis and Inuit children were literally stolen from their parents and transferred to 130 government-funded, church-run facilities. Thousands of aboriginal children died in residential schools as a result of abuse and neglect.

In 1907, Canada's first chief medical officer of health, Peter Bryce, issued a report highly critical of Canada's inadequate efforts to stem the tide of tuberculosis in the schools. Some 24 per cent of residential school students died primarily of TB between 1904 and 1907. The Department of Indian Affairs denied them the improved ventilation, nutrition and care that would have helped stem the epidemic.

And what of the nutrition experiments conducted on residential school children in the 1940s and 50s? According to historian Ian Mosby of the University of Guelph, Canadian researchers used hungry and malnourished aboriginal children to test their theories about vitamin and mineral supplements as substitutes for regular meals.

Much testimony from hundreds of residential school survivors has been gathered over the last few years as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission under Justice Murray Sinclair.

One of the commission's key goals is to "complete a public report that will include recommendations... of the Settlement Agreement concerning the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system."

Ceremonies to mark the conclusion of the commission's work will take place in Ottawa from Sunday to Wednesday (May 31 to June 3).

Justice Sinclair, in an op-ed last year in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, wrote: "We need to take seriously the perspective that the entire process of colonization in Canada would fall within the definition of genocide as contained in the UN Convention."

By facing our history, we may eventually begin to heal, and so, too, might Freddy Taylor and many other survivors of this national tragedy.

Bernie Farber is former CEO of the Canadian Jewish Congress. He is part of an effort, along with former national chief Phil Fontaine and philanthropist Michael Dan, to have Canada's treatment of native people declared a genocide by the United Nations.

Genocide defined

The UN's Convention On The Prevention And Punishment Of The Crime Of Genocide, Article II, defines genocide as "...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

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Direct Link: <https://nowtoronto.com/news/a-question-of-genocide/>

Saskatoon to honour end of Truth and Reconciliation Commission

By Andrea Hill, The StarPhoenix May 27, 2015

A round dance, community lunch and a balloon releasing ceremony will help mark the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Saskatoon next Tuesday.

"This is a day for us to be able to get together — for all citizens — to get together as one to work toward the healing process that so many are looking forward to having," Mayor Don Atchison told reporters Wednesday.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), launched in 2008 to collect the stories of those who lived through residential schools, concludes in June.

Closing events, such as the one in Saskatoon's Victoria Park, are scheduled in cities across the country from May 31 to June 3.

“We look forward to the celebration — not so much the closure of the TRC mandate, but to the celebration of the cultures and the resilience and the strengths of our people,” said Shirley Isbister, president of the Central Urban Metis Federation. She said several generations of her mother-in-law’s family are residential school survivors.

“Many Metis people were in residential school and it’s still in process to have some of those issues settled,” she said.

Rev. Dave Moors, who said he spoke on behalf of the Saskatchewan churches involved in residential schools, said he is honoured to take part in next week’s commemorative event. He has asked all Christian churches in Saskatoon to ring their bells at 10 a.m. Tuesday to mark the closure of the TRC. Bells will ring in Ottawa at the same time.

“The churches have traditionally been on the wrong side of these issues,” Moors said. “To be involved in reconciliation and apology around the residential school system is extremely important.”

Events at Victoria Park kick off with a pipe ceremony at 7:30 a.m. A soup and bannock lunch sponsored by local churches commences at noon, followed by a round dance and balloon releasing ceremony at 2 p.m.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/Saskatoon+honour+Truth+Reconciliation+Commission/11087822/story.html>

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Board votes against Native American mascots for schools

Schools with Native American mascots will have to change their names

By KOIN 6 News Staff Published: May 21, 2015, 12:12 pm Updated: May 21, 2015, 6:15 pm

PORTLAND, Ore. (KOIN) — The Oregon State Board of Education voted on Thursday against an amendment to allow schools to use Native American mascots.

The state board of education’s unanimous vote followed an order from the Oregon legislature to look into the issue in 2014.

A 2012 vote by the board adopted the rule “prohibiting Oregon public schools from using Native American names, symbols, or images as school mascots.” Schools had until July 2017 to comply.

But an amendment to that rule was proposed which would have allowed schools to use Native American mascots if the school had a written agreement with an Oregon federally recognized Native American tribe.

One person who testified Thursday said, “The evidence that we heard in 2011 and 2012 has not changed that imperial studies and research is clear that race-based mascots do nothing to help a student learn or educate themselves.”

Opponents said Native American mascots are racist and said they re-inforce stereotypes. Supporters argue the mascots are a way to honor Native American history showing values of strength and bravery.

Thursday’s vote means the 2012 rule will now take effect as planned in July 2017 for all Oregon school districts.

A handful of schools still have Native American mascots. They will now have to change their names.

KOIN 6 News tried but was unable to speak with board members about their decision.

Direct Link: <http://koin.com/2015/05/21/board-to-vote-on-native-american-mascots-for-schools/>

Blackhorse: Do You Prefer ‘Native American’ or ‘American Indian’? 6 Prominent Voices Respond

[Amanda Blackhorse](#)

5/21/15

As indigenous peoples, names and references to our race and ethnic identity are very important – especially in a time when names and pejorative references to Native people are being challenged in popular culture.

Wherever I go, from the reservation to the city, through the halls of academia, from younger to older, to the grassroots, and in social media, I hear numerous discussions and debates around how people choose to identify with certain references, e.g., which word is the most appropriate: Native American? Native? Indian? American Indian? Indigenous?

My task here was to ask several friends and people whom I (and many others) admire what reference they feel most comfortable with.

This discussion varies in our ever-diverse culture. What I've learned is we can discuss this for hours on end but, when all is said and done, we call ourselves what we want because it is our choice. In fact, choice is something we did not have or were able to practice throughout the annals of U.S. history.

Each time we choose to elect our own names and references we are empowered. This discussion does not argue that the term 'Indian' is better, or that 'indigenous' is, or to invalidate being an American or not to be; it is about choice; what we choose as well as how and why we used these names. One thing is certain, we can all agree to reject pejorative references to Native people, e.g. 'redskins,' 'squaw,' 'savages,' etc. This discussion is complex, and I have discovered there is no singular nor simple answer:

So here we go. The people speak, and we must listen.

1. Radmilla Cody



Photo courtesy Robert Doyle, Canyon Records

Radmilla Cody is (Diné/Navajo) and African-American. She is a Grammy nominee, a multiple Native American Music Awards winner, an international performer, a former Miss Navajo Nation, and the founder of the "Strong Spirit: Life is Beautiful not Abusive" campaign.

Cody would like to be referred to as 'Dine/Navajo,' 'indigenous' and 'Native.' When asked why this is important to her she states, "I used to refer to myself as 'Native American,' but over time I have learned more about colonization and the colonial terms that came with the assimilation process which continues today. We are original people of this so-called USA, therefore we should be acknowledged as such, but also to ourselves as indigenous, as the indigenous backgrounds we identify with; indigenous, or Native of

our own territories.. Not the European settlers' or colonial settlers' identification of who they think we should be. We must reclaim our identity and stop allowing the settler-colonialists to define who we are."

2. Bobby Wilson



Photo courtesy Ryan Redcorn

Bobby Wilson is Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota and is most famous for being a member of the five-piece comedy troupe "The 1491s." Bobby's work is heavily influenced by his Dakota heritage combined with a lifelong city upbringing. Bobby also appeared on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* last year.

"I say Indian a lot," Wilson said. "I'm around many Natives all the time, and using Indian seems to be universal and others can identify with it." Bobby also said he understands the confliction Native people have with the terms 'Indian' and 'Native American,' but as he states, "When I say Indian it doesn't take anything away from me. For some people it may. I'm comfortable with myself and with it."

He also stated he doesn't mind being referred to as 'American Indian,' and references the National Congress of American Indians and the like, whom use the term 'Indian.'

I asked him if he rejects any socially acceptable references to Native people. He said, 'chief.' Wilson has been called 'chief' several times in his life and says it is rooted in racism. He says generally people have a certain idea of what a 'chief' looks like and view him in this way. "If you say to someone, 'draw me a chief,' I guarantee they will not draw a CEO."

3. Roxanne Thomas



Photo courtesy Roxanne Thomas

Roxanne Thomas is Diné (Navajo) and Numa (Paiute). She is currently fulfilling her personal goal of being a full-time caretaker to her son. She has a profession in social work and worked as a mental health provider.

When asked how she refers to herself, Thomas said, “It has changed throughout the years.” She refers to herself mainly as “Diné and Numa-Fallon Paiute/Shoshone Tribe, a.k.a., Navajo and Paiute.” She said she puts more effort into referring to herself by her indigenous tribes and in their indigenous language because, as she stated, “It’s about going back to our original self. Why use names that are give to us?”

When asked how she refers to all Native people, Thomas said, “It’s changing, too. I’m using ‘indigenous’ and ‘Native’ more, and before that I used ‘Native American.’” She also states she is comfortable with using ‘Native American,’ but as she said: “It is a name that has been given to us.” She also states that ‘Native American’ can be anyone who is born in the United States. As for the term ‘Indian,’ she said, “Colonizers used the word ‘Indian’ or ‘American Indian’ and this could describe Indian citizens from the country India.” She states she is not protective of that term because it is important we know whom we are and where we are from. She to teaches her 3-year-old son how to say his four different tribes he is born of in the indigenous language.

4. Douglas Miles



Photo courtesy Daniel Tulley

Douglas Miles is the owner at Apache Skateboards and is San Carlos Apache/Akimel O'odham. Douglas is an artist, designer, curator, muralist, and public speaker. He utilizes art as social practice to motivate and inspire positive processes.

Miles said, "I refer to myself as American Indian." He said he grew up in an era where that was the common term. "People look at it in both ways; 'Indian' is from India, and when this country was 'discovered' the people were looked at as godly people (Indios). I also refer to myself as 'Native American.' I'm comfortable with both of them." Doug then goes on to say, "What would be the better title is 'First Americans' because, in reality, we are the first Americans."

Miles also spoke of love of the land that is now the continental United States. "We are also Americans, and we love America. Natives serve at a higher rate in the military because Native people know in their heart this is their country and it will always be. They will stand up and fight for the land. It's not really about American patriotism, but it's for the love of the land."

Miles added he does not feel comfortable with "anthropological terms, because they weren't written for us. Words such as 'nomadic,' 'hunter gather,' 'urban Indian,' 'rural Indian,' 'reservation Indian,' – they don't accurately explain the Native experience in 2015."

5. Chase Iron Eyes



Chase Iron Eyes

Chase Iron Eyes (Lakota Sioux) is co-founder of [Last Real Indians](#), a media resource for original indigenous content. Chase is a Tribal Economic Consultant, Lakota Peoples Law Project Staff Attorney and 7th Generation fund grant recipient.

Iron Eyes said he refers to himself in his original Lakota language (Oyate Ikce), most people understand it as Sioux. He uses the term Sioux to describe himself at times because that is what people generally understand.

Iron Eyes said when he named his blog and media outlet originally, “The Last Real Indian” (as he was the only writer) he was speaking from a place of wanting to voice his thoughts of the injustices in Native country in an uncensored manner. He felt “The Last Real Indian” was catchy and grabbed the attention of the reader. He wasn’t invalidating other Natives weren’t legitimately ‘Indian,’ but that the under-represented voice of indigenous people must be heard. As more writers were incorporated, they became “The Last Real Indians.” “Anyone can be the last real Indian,” he said.

He said the term ‘Indian’ is that of popular culture, and although it is a debated term, it is one that is commonly used and known. He also believes the term which should be used is ‘original people,’ but the term ‘indigenous’ is very appropriate as well.

Iron Eyes also acknowledged: “Naming is very important because we are the archetypes of our reality, but now we do that in the English language. For those of us who learned English as a first language, things are different because we speak English.”

6. Kyle Blackhorse



Kyle Blackhorse

Kyle Blackhorse is Diné, Tlingit, and Yurok. Blackhorse, 18, is of the Eagle Tribe and Brown Bear Clan of the Tlingit and Yurok Nations and born for the Black Streak Wood People and Edgewater of the Navajo. Blackhorse and the youngest Native American elected Precinct Committeeperson and State Committeeperson of the Arizona Democratic Party, where he is involved in the Native American Caucus that provides education, voice and advocacy for Native American people.

He said he refers to himself by his own tribes: Diné, Tlingit, and Yurok, and then by his clans of his tribes. He does not use the term 'Indian' because as he said "India is on the other side of the world."

He stated he uses the term 'Navajo' to explain 'Diné' because most know it as such. He also prefers to use the term 'Native American' versus 'American Indian.' "It is very important to identify ourselves in our way," he said. Blackhorse said he received this knowledge from his parents and his grandparents who instilled a strong sense of identity in him from a young age. He also stated he refuses to be called, 'Chief' because, "I am not a chief of a tribe. It's a sacred thing." He added, "I would also like to be called by my name, Kyle."

Amanda Blackhorse, Diné, is a mother and activist. She and four other plaintiffs won a case against the Washington football team that stripped it of six of its seven trademarks. Follow her on Twitter [@blackhorse_a](https://twitter.com/blackhorse_a). She lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/21/blackhorse-do-you-prefer-native-american-or-american-indian-6-prominent-voices-respond>

Revolt from indigenous base challenges Bolivia's Morales

AP 1:10 a.m. EDT May 21, 2015



LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Just months after President Evo Morales won re-election with a convincing three-fifths of the vote, Bolivia's first indigenous president is suddenly up against a formidable opposition.

It comes not from the conservative business elite that long has chafed at Morales' leftist rhetoric, but rather from the very "anti-colonialist" movement that propelled him to power nearly a decade ago.

When Morales next week swears in mayors and governors elected in runoff voting May 3, he will be face-to-face with those who have benefited from the discontent with his Movimiento a Socialismo, or MAS.

Opposition candidates won mayoral races in eight of Bolivia's 10 most important cities, a gain of two. MAS held onto only two, relatively minor state capitals — Sucre and Potosi.

Significantly, a former rising star in Morales' inner circle who turned insurgent won the governorship of La Paz state, Bolivia's most populous state, home to the capital and a bastion of indigenous power.

Felix Patzi, a native Aymara like the president, was Morales' first education minister. A drunken-driving arrest undid his 2010 bid for the governorship.

"An opposition is emerging from the very core of MAS," said political scientist Marcel Silva of La Paz's Universidad Publica.

Not only has Morales' party been badly buffeted by corruption scandals and a highly questioned judiciary, critics say he has sold out to economic elites, labor bosses and mining cooperative magnates at the expense of the indigenous majority whose interests he vowed to defend. Critics say he has selectively ignored the constitution adopted in 2009 that granted semi-autonomy to the country's 36 indigenous groups.

"There is a lot of disgruntlement about how power has been exercised," said Jim Shultz, director of the Democracy Center, a nonprofit group based in Cochabamba that supports social justice.

Morales acknowledges that corruption, chiefly involving state-run industries and office-abusing prosecutors and judges, has hurt the movement. While he personally has not been accused of wrongdoing, he is blamed for not adequately investigating and punishing graft.

The opposition mayor-elect in El Alto, the capital's sister city, is also an Aymara, Soledad Chapeton, who unseated a Morales ally after he was caught on video allegedly receiving a payoff.

"The government has worn itself out through its own errors. What's left are indigenous folks who speak well of Morales, but a lot of others are distancing themselves as they feel stepped on," said Adolfo Chavez, former president of a federation of eastern Bolivian indigenous groups.

Chavez broke with Morales in 2011 after the president alienated lowlands indigenous groups by backing a trans-Amazon highway through a pristine nature reserve called TIPNIS.

Another scandal that broke during the recent campaign evinced crooked favoritism within the government-run Fondo Indigena that finances agricultural and other projects with funds from Bolivia's natural gas industry, the government's cash cow.

The state comptroller's office said \$10 million was siphoned from the fund through phantom and inflated projects such as a garlic plantation in which not a single plant was grown and a sheep-raising project in which sickly animals were delivered.

Morales' economic governance, meanwhile, has been more Milton Friedman than Marx, leftist critics complain.

Businessmen got easier credit and fewer export restrictions — and Morales promised to topple Amazon forests to add a million more hectares of tillable land. Union leaders got a government-built hotel and more than a dozen SUVs. Mining cooperatives got tax breaks and a law that lets them accept foreign investment, unorthodox for nominally socialist rulers, though it must come through the government.

When he won a third term in October, Morales' main challenger was cement- and fast food-magnate Samuel Doria Medina from the traditional, capitalist-friendly opposition whose leaders tend to be "mestizos," the term Bolivians use to describe lighter-skinned people of mixed European-indigenous ancestry.

Spin ahead to 2019. Morales is barred from seeking another term, although many suspect he intends to find a way to try. Whether he runs or anoints a successor, the main challenger is most apt to be an indigenous defector.

The night of his election victory for La Paz governor, Patzi declared himself the candidate to beat in the next presidential vote. Whatever happens, he fits the cultural profile.

As education minister, Patzi sought equal standing for native languages in curricula and similar respect for traditional Andean beliefs.

"Evo's government was indigenous-focused while I was there," Patzi said. Then, it "abandoned the possibility of a true change seeking equality of opportunity for both indigenous and mestizos."

Governing party deputy Manuel Canelas calls Patzi a "traitor," charged that the governor will try to divide MAS in La Paz, where it dominates the local legislature, by putting allies on the public payroll.

Patzi calls MAS "a stalled and exhausted project." His confederate in the Soberania y Libertad party, Luis Revilla, was re-elected mayor of La Paz.

Patzi advocates restoration of the communal politics traditional to the high Andes, the very civic-minded culture that had him stomping mud and straw into adobe bricks for home construction as punishment for his drunken-driving violation. He calls his project a third way, neither capitalism nor socialism. It emphasizes consensus — and the regular rotation of power.

"Morales embodied those ideals," he said. "But people are frustrated."

Direct Link: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/05/21/indigenous-revolt-bolivia/27699325/>

Paraguay Official Sentenced for Illegal Sale of Indigenous Lands, Faces Other Charges

[Rick Kearns](#)

5/22/15

The former head of Paraguay's Indigenous Institute was sentenced last month to six and a half years in prison for illegally selling indigenous land; and is also awaiting trial for allegedly stealing \$700,000 from the Institute that had been earmarked for poverty relief

and development following a judgement against the country from the Inter American Court of Human Rights.

A Federal Paraguayan Tribunal handed down the sentence of six and a half years against Ruben Quesnel on April 16 for the illegal sale of 61,776 acres to Julia Vargas, who has returned titles to the land to the Institute while Quesnel's accomplice, notary Justina Esteche, received a two year sentence for her role in the crime.

Quesnel became head of the Institute (known as INDI) in 2012, not long after the coup that ousted former President of Paraguay Fernando Lugo. In November of that year Quesnel made the illegal sale of land belonging to the Cuyabia community of the Ayoreo people in the Chaco region, on which 19 indigenous families were living.

According to The Indigenous World Report 2014 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Ayoreo community took action against the land theft.

“In an exemplary act of resistance, organization and mobilization, the indigenous Ayoreo came out in protest, setting up road blocks and demanding reparation of their rights in order to ensure that, despite the formal transfer of ownership, the community would still be able to live on its lands.”

Soon after the protests the case was referred to the Special Unit for Economic Crimes and Corruption of the Public Prosecutor's Office. By 2014 the Prosecutors had filed charges against Quesnel and Esteche regarding the illegal sale of the Ayoreo lands which, like all indigenous communal property, is protected by the Paraguayan Constitution.

Before the Prosecutors had filed charges against Quesnel for the illegal sale they had already started to investigate the allegations that Quesnel and some associates had stolen \$700,000 from INDI that had been earmarked for food, medical goods, road and housing works for the impoverished Yakye Axa and Sawhoyamaxa communities. The theft and corruption charges were then registered against Quesnel in late 2013.

The Yakye Axa and Sawhoyamaxa peoples had been displaced from their lands and were in the midst of a dispute with a powerful landowner when the theft occurred. These communities had been living in difficult conditions even after the Inter American Court of Human Rights had ordered Paraguay to return close to 30,000 acres to the communities.

According to activist Oscar Ayala, of the Tierra Viva legal advocacy organization, the monies would have provided much needed assistance to the indigenous communities.

“Both communities have been living on the edge of a road for 20 years,” Ayala said in a press interview in 2013.

“In the case of Yakye Axa, they have land but they cannot enter it to inhabit the forest areas because they have no roads; meanwhile, the Sawhoyamaya people will continue to live on the side of the road waiting for Congress to approve the request of expropriation of 35,000 acres, in the same area, currently in the hands of German citizen Heribert Roedel.”

No date had been set for the charges connected with the alleged theft as of press time.

In late April of this year, Quesnel’s attorney announced that they would appeal the sentence for the illegal sale of Ayoreo lands.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/22/paraguay-official-sentenced-illegal-sale-indigenous-lands-faces-other-charges-160424>

American Indians Serve in the U.S. Military in Greater Numbers Than Any Ethnic Group and Have Since the Revolution

Posted: 05/22/2015 5:35 pm EDT Updated: 05/22/2015 5:59 pm EDT

Kevin Gover (Pawnee), Director, [Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian](#)

On this Memorial Day holiday, as we remember those who have given their lives in service to our country while protecting the freedoms and ideals we hold dear, many of our fellow Americans remain unaware of the major contributions Native Americans have made to our nation's armed forces. In fact, American Indians serve in their country's armed forces in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group, and they have served with distinction in every major conflict for over 200 years.

Best known are the Native American Code Talkers who served in World Wars I and II. Theirs is a remarkable story and their contributions were vital to our success, but there are countless other Native Americans who have served in the U.S. military who deserve recognition. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, as of 2012 there were over [22,000](#) American Indians and Alaska Natives on active duty, and the 2010 Census identified over [150,000](#) American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. 27 Native Americans have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military honor.

As the director of the [National Museum of the American Indian](#) and a citizen of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, I've witnessed first-hand why Native Americans feel compelled to serve. I was raised with stories of friends and family members' bravery on the battlefield. Native Americans served in World War I even though they were not

citizens of the United States. In fact, it was not until after World War II in the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act that all states were required to allow Native Americans to vote on the same basis as any other American. Despite decades of persecution and broken promises, despite being dispossessed of, and often forcibly removed from, their ancestral homelands, American Indians have served and continue to serve in our nation's armed forces in numbers that belie their small percentage of the American population. They step forward when duty calls. Now, let us on this Memorial Day support a memorial on the National Mall dedicated to the selfless service and patriotism of our Native American servicemen and women.

In December 2013, Congress passed legislation authorizing the National Museum of the American Indian, working with the National Congress of American Indians, to create a memorial on the grounds of the museum honoring Native American veterans. An advisory committee is being formed, with members representing Native veterans from across the United States and all branches of military service. Following a series of discussions with Native communities and veterans, a design competition will be conducted and a winning proposal selected.

I hope you agree the time has come to honor the extraordinary service, dedication, and patriotism of American Indian veterans with a [National Native American Veterans' Memorial](#).

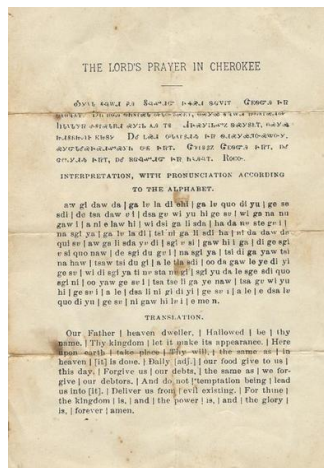


Image Caption: The late Woodrow Roach of Tahlequah, OK, fought for the U.S. Army from 1944-45 and believed the prayer to be his good luck charm while serving in Italy and the Philippines. The prayer is written in the Cherokee language syllabary as well as phonetically, as Roach was a citizen of the Cherokee Nation. It is now in the permanent [collection](#) of the [National Museum of the American Indian](#) in Washington, D.C

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/national-museum-of-the-american-indian/american-indians-serve-in-the-us-military_b_7417854.html

Trafficking in Native Communities

[Victoria Sweet](#)

5/24/15

Although attention to human trafficking has grown in the last few years, trafficking is not a modern crime. Trafficking has existed in Native communities for centuries, since the earliest point of contact with Europeans. According to journal accounts, Christopher Columbus engaged in the exploitation of indigenous people from the moment he encountered them, including providing indigenous women and girls for his crew and tolerating rape and other atrocities. This behavior set the tone for the exploitation and abuse of Native women at the hands of non-Native men that continues into the 21st century.

In an article documenting the history and describing lingering effects of historical attitudes and behaviors, legal scholar Sarah Deer wrote “[t]oday, the eroticized image of Indian women is so commonplace in our society that it is unremarkable—the image of a hypersexual Indian woman continues to be used to market any number of products and ideas.” Normalization of these hyper sexualized images and historical attitudes contribute to views of Native women that disparage or fetishize their ethnicity. In a report on the prostitution and trafficking of Native women in Minnesota, Native women share their experiences to illustrate how ethnicity is directly connected to why they became prostitutes and how they were treated by clients. One woman said “I’m put down anyway, so why not prostitution? I’m called a ‘squaw’, so why not?” Another, discussing a client said “[h]e likes my hair down and sometimes he calls me Pocahontas. He likes to role play like that. He wants me to call him John.”

While many studies provide statistics on other forms of violence, little empirical human trafficking data exists. The reasons for this vary. Many trafficking victims do not identify themselves as victims. They suffer from fear, shame, and distrust of law enforcement. It is also not unusual for trafficking victims to develop traumatic bonds with, and want to protect, their traffickers because of the manipulative nature of this crime. However, data and research from related studies suggest that human trafficking may likely not only affect Native women and girls, but also disproportionately impact them. This article will explore child protection implications of trafficking through the review of two bodies of research that may provide useful information on trafficking of Native women and girls 1) the research on the existence of predictive risk factors within the community and 2) the data on the impact of the commercial sex trade.

Predictive Risk Factors

Generally, it is estimated that 50 to 80 percent of identified trafficking victims are or have been involved with child welfare services at some point in their lives. Traffickers often prey on children and youth minimal social support. Additional risk factors include: poverty; limited education; lack of work opportunities; homelessness, being an orphaned, runaway, or "thrown away" youth; history of previous sexual abuse; physical,

emotional, or mental health challenges; drug or alcohol addiction; post-traumatic stress disorder; multiple arrests; and a history of truancy or being expelled.

These risks may be magnified in Native communities. According to the most recent data available “Native American children are overrepresented [in foster care] at a rate that is 2.1 times their rate in the general population” and as many as 32.4 percent of Native children and youth live in poverty. Intergenerational trauma patterns associated with the history of tribal relocations, boarding schools, and large scale adoptions of Native children have increased the likelihood that Native women and girls will experience additional predictive risk factors. Reports from Alaska also suggest that traffickers may target Native girls. In 2010, Anchorage police and the Federal Bureau of Investigations warned delegates at the Association of Village Council Presidents annual convention of a rise in rural Alaska Native girls and women who leave their families and villages for Anchorage being lured into prostitution with the promise of security. The sex-traffickers see these young Native runaways as especially easy prey.

Commercial Sex Trade Data

Information on commercial sex trade can help paint a picture of trafficking in Native communities. Although not every person involved in prostitution is legally a trafficking victim, according to limited data, many are. In one commercial sexual exploitation study, researchers discovered that about half of the women interviewed “met a conservative legal definition of human trafficking.”

A review of community impact data taken from four formal studies demonstrates the disproportionate impact the commercial sex trade has on indigenous communities in both the United States and Canada. In Hennepin County, Minnesota, roughly 25 percent of the women arrested for prostitution identified as American Indian while American Indians comprise only 2.2 percent of the total population. In Anchorage, Alaska, 33 percent of the women arrested for prostitution were Alaska Native, but Alaska Natives make up only 7.9 percent of the population. Canadian studies show similar results. In Winnipeg, 50 percent of adult sex workers were defined as Aboriginal, while Aboriginal peoples comprise only 10 percent of the population and 52 percent of the women involved in the commercial sex trade in Vancouver were identified as First Nations, while First Nations people comprise only 7 percent of the general population.

Though this data does not provide a complete picture of the impact of either the commercial sex trade or human trafficking on indigenous communities, it does illuminate a disturbing trend. In all four studies, indigenous women were disproportionately represented in the commercial sex trade. Since close to half of sex trade workers may meet a legal definition of trafficking victims, it stands to reason that disproportionately large numbers of Native women may be victims of trafficking and trafficking threatens the security of indigenous communities.

Recommendations

Native women and girls may continue to be disproportionately impacted by human trafficking as long as society continues to embrace hyper sexualized and degrading images of Native women and intergenerational traumatic patterns are not effectively addressed. Mitigating these risks begins with education. Communities should:

- Continue to raise awareness within communities of the signs of trafficking and of the increased risk for Native women both on and off reservations.

- Train educators, medical workers, social workers, law enforcement, street outreach workers, attorneys, judges, and other related professionals on identification and response.

- Pay particular attention to culturally appropriate services for Native girls and women trafficked outside of their reservations.

- Explore solutions to the rates of Native children placed outside of the family or extended family and to problems associated with ICWA compliance. Both of these issues increase the number of Native children in care.

- Improve protocols to track children in the system to identify missing foster child in a timely manner.

Courts can also develop court rules and best practices to deal with trafficking victims and change the way trafficked youth are treated in courts around the country. According to Los Angeles Superior Court Commissioner Catherine J. Pratt, youth end up charged with a crime that “arguably they cannot commit ... if you are too young to consent to sex ... you are too young to consent to sell sex. ... We lock them up, take away their ability to make decisions for themselves and label them with some of the most shameful terms used to describe humans: ‘prostitutes’ and ‘criminals.’”

Legislatures around the country should continue to tackle the need for better legal codes that define human trafficking appropriately, mandate strong consequences for traffickers, and protect victims. Efforts should address the need for rehabilitative services like long term housing and job training and for more research to assist policymakers in understanding the impact trafficking has on Native communities and off reservation community members. Steps need to be taken to plan for the future and mitigate risk to end the cycle of abuse and exploitation.

This story originally appeared in the [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Newsletter](#) Synergy, Vol. 18, No. 1.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/24/trafficking-native-communities-160475>

Australia's closing of Aboriginal communities sparks protests

Lauren Williams, Special for USA TODAY 6:02 a.m. EDT May 24, 2015



SYDNEY — Government moves to close remote indigenous communities because of alleged social problems and the cost of maintaining them is triggering a new wave of protests planned for next week across Australia.

Western Australia's government said it can no longer afford to subsidize basic services to communities in the state's rugged and sprawling Outback. The government also said the communities are plagued by problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, high levels of child sex abuse and low school attendance rates.

So far, the government has closed one community, Oombulgurri, home to roughly 100 people. Last November, it shuttered its single shop, hospital and school, cut off water and electricity, and bulldozed the settlement after evicting the last remaining residents.

Aboriginal groups point to their spiritual connection to the land that is legally recognized, and they say the government should pay to eradicate the social problems it claims exist rather than close communities.

The groups also contend that the real reason the government is preparing to evict indigenous populations is to make way for uranium and coal mining.

"This is white man's greed," said Jenny Monroe, an Aboriginal community leader, who accused the government of creating "victims of trauma."

"Our law is the law of the land, not the laws of the illegitimate occupiers," she said. "They have been doing this for 227 years, and calling it protection."

Last November, Western Australia Premier Colin Barnett said, "We are probably going to see certainly over 100, maybe 150 remote communities close," which would result in the resettlement of thousands of residents.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott backed the move, telling national radio it was not the taxpayers' job to "subsidize lifestyle choices."

The comments enraged Aboriginal leaders, prompting mass rallies in Sydney, Perth and Melbourne. On May 1, more than 10,000 people marched in Melbourne's central business district, temporarily shutting down the city. Rallies were also held in Los Angeles, London, Berlin and Christchurch, New Zealand. New protests are planned for Tuesday and again on June 26.

Since the protests, the government has backed away from the number of communities it will shut, saying they will be closed through a process of "consultation" with Aboriginal leaders to improve livelihoods.

"This is no longer a story about a potential hit list of 150 communities to close," said Michael Tetlow, a spokesman for Aboriginal Affairs Minister Peter Collier. "It's a long-term project that will take years and has no end point."

That change in policy has not mollified critics. "These people are on traditional lands. They don't want to be relocated all over again," said Ken Canning, one of the protest organizers. He called the closures "attempted genocide."

Western Australia Police Commissioner Karl O'Callaghan said the communities are dysfunctional and dangerous. "The way these communities are set up at the moment, I cannot guarantee the safety of children."

Anthony Watson, chairman of the Kimberley Land Council, an Aboriginal land management and culture group, complained that there has been inadequate support for those displaced.

"There was no plan to look after those people, they were just dumped on the fringes of town. Where is the housing, where are the jobs?" said Watson.

While admitting that problems exist in the communities, Watson questioned the motivation behind the government plan, noting that mining companies frequently survey the land occupied by communities.

"Sure, we want to make our communities safe, but you don't solve the problems by just going and closing communities," he said. "That just shows the police aren't doing their job."

"A lot of our families are buried on these lands," he added. "These places have special meaning. You have to wonder about their motivations."

Direct Link: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/05/24/australia-shuts-aborigine-communities/27530491/>

In Honor of Memorial Day – Memorials Honoring Our Fallen Native Warriors

[Vincent Schilling](#)

5/25/15

Since the first arrival of Europeans onto Turtle Island and in connection to the conflicts that first arose in association, Native Americans – with the inclusion of American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians – have enlisted and volunteered for the armed services at a higher rate than any other ethnicity.

According to government officials during World War II, if all other races had enlisted at the same rate as American Indians, selective service and the draft would not have been necessary.

Considering those soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen and women that have served and tragically did not return home to their families, here are some of the memorials honoring our fallen Native warriors across the country.

The National Native American Vietnam Veterans Memorial

In Neillsville, Wisconsin lies the [Highground](#), a memorial park that pays tribute to those fallen service members that gave the ultimate sacrifice to their country. In a park that honors veterans from WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam sits the National Native American Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a memorial dedicated to the fallen Native American soldiers that gave their lives in Vietnam.

The memorial which was dedicated in 1995, is the first national monument to be placed at the Highground. The monument depicts a Native soldier in jungle fatigues holding a rifle in one hand and an eagle staff in the other. The soldier stands atop a 10 ton slab of red granite, which signifies the blood of warriors lost in Vietnam.

The names of all Native Vietnam casualties are etched on four granite panels surrounding the memorial.

Video of The Highground Veterans Memorial Park - National Native American Vietnam Veterans Tribute

The All-Nations Native American Veterans Memorial

The All-Nations Native American Veterans Memorial was started on April 20 of 2013 after Bill Stam transported a life-size bronze statue of a Native warrior hunting buffalo nearly 800 miles to his home in Jefferson, Oregon.

In the years since its creation, the once subtle Native memorial now has 17 flags from 17 tribal nations flying and 14 large blue granite slabs each containing hundreds of names of Native veterans. Though the memorial holds both living and those in memoriam, the memorial certainly honors those that have fallen.

“As far as I know, we are the only All Nations memorial that also honors all 34 Nations of Code Talkers dating back to WWI,” Stam told ICTMN.

Families wishing to add their veterans name to the memorial can do so by information found on their [Facebook page](#).



Navajo Nation Veterans Memorial Park

At the base of Window Rock in Arizona sits the Navajo Nation Veterans Memorial Park to honor the many Navajos who served in the U. S. military to include Code Talkers. This [park](#) was designed and built by the Navajo as a “living” Veteran’s Memorial designed by Native Vietnam Veterans, Navajo Code Talker’s and Navajo medicine men.

The park has many symbolic structures to include a circular path outlining the four cardinal directions, 16 angled steel pillars with the names of war veterans, and a healing sanctuary featuring a fountain made of sandstone.



Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza Navajo Code Talkers Memorial



Courtesy wesleybolinplaza.com

Located in Phoenix, Arizona, The Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza – in addition to its memorials for public servants, contains the [Navajo Code Talkers Memorial](#), a statue dedicated on February 28, 2008 by the Navajo Code Talkers Foundation. Sculpted by Oreland Joe a member of the Navajo and Cowboy Artists of America, the statue depicts a Navajo Code Talker sending a message via a combat telephone.

American Indian Veterans National Memorial

Though not specifically a memorial for Veterans who have passed, the American Indian Veterans National Memorial at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona honors all Native service members.



The memorial consists of several sculptures by acclaimed Native artists Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache, 1914-1994) and Michael Naranjo (Santa Clara Pueblo). Houser created a 10-foot-tall, 2,000 pound sculpture entitled *Unconquered II* which honors service and sacrifice spanning more than three centuries. Houser and Naranjo, a Native sculpturist blinded in Vietnam, created two smaller works (*He's My Brother* and *The Gift*) which accompany the larger sculpture – which was the last piece they sculpted.

Proposed: The Native American Veterans Memorial on the National Mall in Washington D.C.

In 2013, H.R. 2319, the Native American Veterans' Memorial Amendments Act bill was enacted after being signed into law by The President on December 26, 2013. The National Museum of the American Indian will eventually host the Native Veterans Memorial.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/25/honor-memorial-day-memorials-honoring-our-fallen-native-warriors-160477>

Memorial Day 2015: What it means to be an American Indian veteran

By Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Published May 25, 2015



Soldiers of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, also known as The Old Guard, place flags at grave sites at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Thursday, May 22, 2014, as part of the annual "Flags-In" ceremony in preparation for Memorial Day. (AP Photo/Cliff Owen)

"Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave." These words are ingrained in us. We sing them proudly at ballgames, and BBQ's, firework displays and ceremonies honoring the many occasions of celebration and remembrance that make us all American.

Most likely choruses of our national anthem will be performed many times over this Memorial Day weekend in honor of our veterans. It's America's way of paying tribute for their service.

This weekend always gives me pause. What is sacrifice, what is service, what does it mean to be an American veteran, what does it mean to be American?

I pose these questions because I understand and represent this country the only way I can...as an American Indian. My history and heritage is beautiful and complex. I am a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, and call Colorado home. I am also a veteran – I served proudly in the Air Force during Korean War.

So yes, I am American and I am Indian and I am a vet. I believe I was compelled to serve to honor the warrior tradition which is inherent to most Native American societies – the pillars of strength, honor, pride, devotion, and wisdom.

Yes, I am American and I am Indian and I am a vet. I believe I was compelled to serve to honor the warrior tradition which is inherent to most Native American societies – the pillars of strength, honor, pride, devotion, and wisdom.

What many do not know is that American Indians serve in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group in our great country. According to the Department of Defense, in 2011, there were [more than 137,000](#) American Indian and Alaska Native

Veterans living in the United States. American Indians have participated with distinction in United States military for [more than 200 years](#); their courage, determination, and fighting spirit recognized by American military leaders as early as the 18th century.

Here's what I know. I love America, it is my home and the journey to freedom of the Native people is staked in controversy and conflict, bravery and defeat. Native Americans have overlooked decades of persecution and broken promises to serve as courageous servicemen and women.

From the beginning of this great nation American Indians have been joined with their American brothers and sisters in battle, and in peace. Each tribal leader connected indefinitely to our great American Military leaders as witnesses of the battles we are born from. I protect the foundation of the Constitution of the United States, and I am connected to the land of my Native ancestors.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell represented Colorado in the United States Senate from 1993 until 2005.

Campbell also served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1987 to 1993.

He was stationed in Korea during the Korean War as an air policeman; he left the Air Force in 1953 with the rank of Airman Second Class, as well as the Korean Service Medal and the Air Medal.

Author's note: *In December 2013, the United States Congress authorized the establishment of the National Native American Veterans' Memorial on the grounds of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). The legislation charges NMAI with creating a memorial that would give "all Americans the opportunity to learn of the proud and courageous tradition of service of Native Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States."*

Working together with the National Congress of American Indians and other American Indian groups, the museum has begun preliminary plans to construct this memorial in the next five years and has formed an Advisory Committee that is chaired by the Honorable Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne) and Chickasaw Nation Lieutenant Governor Jefferson Keel.

Direct Link: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2015/05/25/memorial-day-2015-what-it-means-to-be-american-indian-veteran.html>

Aboriginal language Wikipedia faces cultural hurdles, say researchers

A predominantly oral language, such as Nyungar, would need Wikipedia to be more flexible in allowing audio and video to be uploaded



Nyungar language teacher Yibiyung Roma Winmar with academic Clint Bracknell in 2015. Winmar will be in charge of the language immersion session of workshops in Perth for the 'Nyungarpedia'. Photograph: Lauchie Gillett/Supplied

Tuesday 26 May 2015 08.43 BST Last modified on Tuesday 26 May 2015 13.36 BST

Researchers looking at setting up an Aboriginal language [Wikipedia](#) say the site will have to change if it is to accommodate cultural differences.

Nyungar man and University of Sydney lecturer Clint Bracknell is one of a group of academics, along with others from the University of Western Australia and Curtin University tackling how to create a Wikipedia version in the language of his people.

If successful, it will become the first Wikipedia in an Indigenous Australian language.

The site is now accessible in 288 languages. Proposals for other language versions must meet [certain criteria](#), including “a sufficient number of living native speakers to form a viable community and audience”.

Its founder, Jimmy Wales, once described Wikipedia as an attempt to “create and distribute a free encyclopedia of the highest possible quality to every single person on the planet in their own language”.

Although Wikipedia had been “supportive”, Bracknell said there were several hurdles to be overcome: “Any language that’s not predominantly written is going to require greater flexibility in terms of uploading audio and video.”

The top-down, authoritative writing style of the site also posed issues for Nyungar culture, Bracknell said, when their knowledge was so closely tied to country, family and other relationships. “Just having knowledge in text form and online, divorced from those connections, is a bit strange,” he said.

A “Nyungarpedia” would not be a direct translation of the English-version Wikipedia and could be as simple as a word list with pictures, with linked entries. A page about “yonga”, the Nyungar word for kangaroo, could then have “a story about yonga, an entry about yonga meat, and an another about hunting, for example, with audio and visuals”.

Bracknell said the legitimacy of oral accounts by community elders would have to be given greater recognition. “Wikipedia comes out of a European tradition in which a book is a significant source,” he said. “Whereas we have [journalist] Daisy Bates who has written all sorts of things in books about Aboriginal people that aren’t true.”

The Nyungar language is spoken at home by 369 people in Australia, according to the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics, a rise from 240 people in 2006. Their ancestral lands are in south-west Western Australia.

Despite the challenges, Bracknell said the internet posed a huge potential for maintaining the health of Aboriginal languages and other minority languages.

By connecting language users across vast distances – “a Nyungar-speaking student could be living in France and still interact with Nyungar people back at home, or cousins working elsewhere” – and prevent a language from going out of use, he said.

Direct Link: <http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/may/26/aboriginal-language-wikipedia-faces-cultural-hurdles-say-researchers>

Native American Students In Utah Are Getting Pushed Out Of School At Alarming Rates

Posted: 05/26/2015 6:05 pm EDT Updated: 3 hours ago



Native American students in Utah may be getting referred to law enforcement agencies before they even know how to read.

Fifty-five Native American students in kindergarten through sixth grade were [referred to police officers during the 2011-2012 school year](#) in Utah. By comparison, not a single

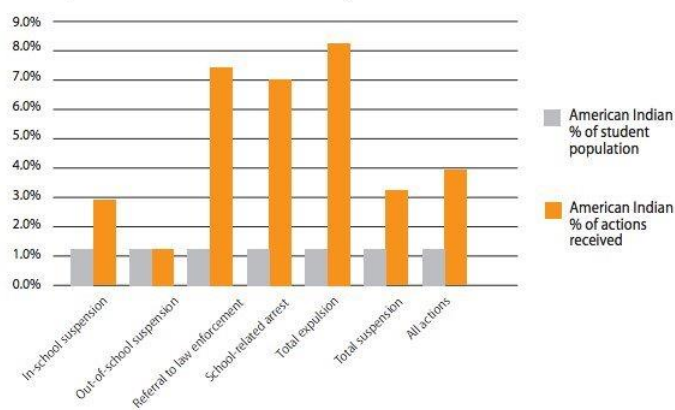
white student in this age group received this action, even though the state educates significantly more white kids, according to a new report from the University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law Public Policy Clinic.

Around the country, [Native American students face disproportionate rates of suspension, expulsion and referrals to law enforcement](#), according to 2011-2012 data from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, the most recent school year available. These disparities are particularly acute in Utah, the new research reveals, even though Native students are only a small portion of the state's student population.

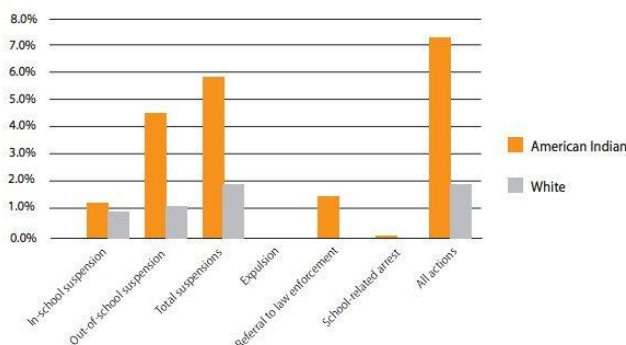
The report from the University of Utah looks at state-level data collected from the Office for Civil Rights, zeroing in on the disproportionate punishments Native American students face in school. Native American students in Utah are more likely than any other student group -- including all other students of color -- to get referred to police or arrested at school, and are 7 ½ times more likely to face expulsion than white students.

These severe punishments serve to push students away from school and help contribute to the so-called "school-to-prison" pipeline for Native students, the report states. Thirty-one percent of Native American students in Utah dropped out of high school in 2014, compared to a 15 percent state average.

Percent of Actions Received
Compared to % of Student Population



Percent of Demographic Receiving Action



It's not clear what behaviors lead to Native American students' suspensions or expulsions, as such data is not collected in a standardized manner. However, information from one of the state's districts paints a picture of the types of circumstances that lead to extreme punishment.

In Utah's San Juan School District, two Native students in 2014 were referred to law enforcement after they went into the teachers lounge looking for a teacher. While in the lounge -- which was empty -- they took two bottles of Dr. Pepper from the refrigerator. After getting caught, the students were referred to law enforcement for their "theft," according to a log of the district's disciplinary actions sent to University of Utah researchers.

In another incident, "a student was huffing from a dust cleaner can and got dizzy and passed out in class. [Administrators] referred him to law enforcement because ... they said it was possession of a drug. There's ambiguity in terms of what could be considered a drug," researcher Vanessa Walsh told The Huffington Post.

Beyond disparities in discipline, Native American students around the country face a unique set of challenges. They have abnormally low graduation rates and face high rates of poverty.

"American Indians occupy a unique place in this country. They are classified by sociologists as among those 'involuntary minorities' who were coercively incorporated into American society. They are separated by culture, language, polity, and religion," the report said.

Walsh speculated that 19th- and 20th-century boarding schools designed to forcibly assimilate Native American students also play a role in the vulnerabilities faced by this population. In these boarding schools, Native American students were forbidden from partaking in any of their cultural traditions.

"The history of assimilation policies we had for so long, I have to think in some part it plays a role in the mindset of American Indians," Walsh told HuffPost. "We've had such a tortured relationship with this community."

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/26/native-american-students-utah_n_7444180.html

Choosing life: Native American youth face higher suicide risk

By Laura Paskus and Bryant Furlow New Mexico In Depth

Updated: 05/26/2015 04:05:49 PM MDT [0 comments](#)



Coloradas Mangas works at his desk, reviewing files of new students enrolled in community programs in December 2014. (Adria Malcolm/New Mexico In Depth)

HELP AND RESOURCES

[Agora Crisis Center Line](#), 24 hours: (855) HELP-1-NM or (505) 277-3013, or [chat online](#)

[The CALL](#) (Crisis Assistance Listening Line), 24 hours: (866) 314-6841 or (575) 646-CALL

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): (800) 273-8255

Hopeline Network: 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

[American Association of Suicidology](#)

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

[Sibling Survivors of Suicide](#)

[Honoring Native Life clearinghouse](#)

[New Mexico Suicide Prevention Coalition](#)

[New Mexico Suicide Intervention Project](#)

Like most young people, Coloradas Mangas wonders about his future.

He imagines working as a museum curator or as a park ranger at someplace like Yellowstone National Park. Even better, he'd prefer to stay close to home on the Mescalero Apache Reservation and work at the nearby Guadalupe Mountains National Park.

It is autumn 2014. The late afternoon sun sets a grid of light on Mangas' face. With rectangular glasses and long black hair brushed out down his back, Mangas taps slim fingers against the surface of his desk, politely resigned to be talking with a reporter.

And so he begins a story about survival.

Long ago, in a cave within the Guadalupe, two boys hid from chaos. Fleeing from an ambush, the people couldn't bring along the boys, one lame and the other blind. They bundled them in the cave, with food to help them survive until it was safe to return. After a while, their food cache dwindled and the boys feared no one would come for them. Then they heard a sound from the back of the cave. Four deities emerged to stave off sickness, starvation, evil. They saved the boys, reuniting them with their people.

Today, the Mescalero Apache perform crown dances in honor of those spirits, Mangas explains, during times of difficulty, sorrow.

Today is such a time, some say, as Native American youth in New Mexico are dying by suicide at an alarming rate.

For years, Mangas has battled the sorrow. As a Ruidoso High School sophomore in 2010, he spoke against the silence and the stigma that surrounds youth suicide.

In the two years previous, groups of teens on the Navajo Nation and the Mescalero Apache reservation had died by suicide, news that made headlines. At the time, reports tallied nine deaths in the two communities.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Native American youth are dying by their own hands at a rate higher than in other racial/ethnic groups. You might already know this. Headlines and news stories every few years focus attention on the issue, usually after a cluster of children or youth decide to take their lives in one of New Mexico's small towns or communities.

By any measure, the suicide rate among young Native Americans is a crisis. But you wouldn't know this judging by the issues that generate the most conversation among our state's public officials or news stories that offer glancing coverage. I'm speaking of the broader community I know as New Mexico, not of New Mexico's tribal communities, where people can't escape this grim reality and where work is being done to combat the crisis. But aren't we all part of the same community, whether we live in Albuquerque, or Jal, or Shiprock, or Anthony, or Jemez? That is, if we believe the rhetoric about community and how community takes care of its most vulnerable, which is a well-established criterion by which one assesses the moral health of a community.

I wonder why the topic registers scant attention outside certain pockets of New Mexico's population. Could it be that many of us find day-to-day life tough enough without having to ponder the stomach-churning statistics around teen suicide? A thousand concerns

cloud our minds. If we are parents, we worry about our children making their way in this life. If others rely on us financially, we fret about keeping a job in an era of so much economic uncertainty. Then there's the randomness of life as unexpected surprises or shocks compete for our focus.

I get it. For many of us there is only so much emotional or financial resources to go around.

As for the media, we live in an age of smaller newsroom staffs and diminished resources with which they can focus a light on compelling but complicated stories. And the Native American youth suicide issue is complex. Just getting a handle on the true contours of the crisis presents a challenge.

During the reporting of this series, New Mexico In Depth found that two databases maintained by separate state agencies have differing totals for Native American teen suicides over a period of time.

New Mexico in Depth's analysis suggests something else, too: both databases underestimate the true number of Native lives lost to suicide. Without better data collection, however, no one can know the true extent of the problem and young Native people across New Mexico will continue to die.

While it might not seem like it from reading headlines day-in, day-out, the heart of journalism beats with hope. The best of the tradition identifies a problem with the anticipation that its audience will seize on the importance of a subject and bring to bear a collective focus on the challenge.

It is with that hope that NMID offers this series in a spirit of both humility and gratitude: Humility because as hard as we've worked, we know we haven't captured the full picture of the sheer scale of human loss; and gratitude for all the people who opened their doors to us as we reported and wrote about this important, difficult subject.

— Trip Jennings, New Mexico In Depth

That spring, Mangas was one of several Native speakers to appear during a hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, where he [ticked off name after name](#) of those who had died during his 16 years.

He testified about the night he checked his phone at a youth meeting of the Mescalero Reformed Church: "I got a message I never thought I would get, a text message from my friend saying she loved me and that I will always have a place in her heart," he said.

He called the police, he said, but no one responded.



Coloradas Mangas, who works in suicide prevention, stands silent atop a peak in the Sacramento Mountains overlooking the Mescalero Apache Reservation with tears streaming from his eyes. Dec. 4, 2014, the day this photo was taken, was the first time he saw this view of his community. (Adria Malcolm/New Mexico In Depth)

So Mangas went to the forest and searched until midnight: “I looked everywhere, every tree, and I found her. It was a good thing I found her when I did. Otherwise, she would have been gone forever.”

Mangas told the senators a boost in mental health services was needed. So was streamlined Medicaid approval for people who are referred to residential treatment centers. He wished the tribe would build places where young people could hang out and have fun. And he called out Native people for their silence.

“I am also from a new generation of young men and women who believe in breaking the silence and seeking help,” Mangas told the committee. “I believe in change.”

Higher suicide rates

Almost five years later, Mangas is still waiting.

Employed part-time by Systems of Care – just a stone's throw from the squat Indian Health Services hospital that serves the reservation — he works with young people and their parents, talking about coping skills, drugs and alcohol, and suicide prevention. His work there isn't funded by the tribe, but through a federal grant and the University of New Mexico.

“It's not just Native people that face issues like this. Hispanic people face issues like this, Anglo-American people, African-American people – all these other ethnic groups face the same thing,” Mangas says. “We need to work towards trying to prevent suicide for everybody's children.”



L.J. Vandever, 10, waits for his turn to skate at a competition held June 21, 2014, in Thoreau. (Adria Malcolm/New Mexico In Depth)

Many experts echo his belief that all people face issues that could lead to suicide. But New Mexico's Native youth suicide rates are commonly more than twice as high as those seen in other ethnicities.

To complicate matters, accurately tracking those numbers has proved difficult. An analysis by New Mexico In Depth found that two databases maintained by separate state agencies have differing totals for Native American youth suicides. According to New Mexico vital statistics data kept by the state Health Department, 201 Native Americans between the ages of 9 and 24 died by suicide in New Mexico between 1999 and 2013, the most recent year represented in the database. Meanwhile, the state's Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI) has records of only 161 investigated deaths of Native American youth between 2000 and 2014.

New Mexico in Depth's analysis suggests something else, too: both databases underestimate the true number of Native lives lost to suicide.

But without better data collection, no one can know the true extent of the problem – and young Native people across New Mexico will continue to die.

Many factors contribute to the apparent incompleteness of official statistics. Investigators from OMI lack jurisdiction on federal or sovereign tribal lands and can only investigate reservation deaths when tribal officials invite them to do so. On the Navajo Nation, which crosses four state borders, that means sometimes New Mexico might investigate deaths in Arizona. Even when tribal investigators ask OMI for help, families do not always cooperate. Suicide is stigmatized and taboo; some traditional Natives frown upon autopsies. Loved ones won't always disclose suicide notes to OMI investigators, who are often “outsiders” – Anglos or Hispanics from non-tribal communities.

Often, possible suicides are left unresolved with an “undetermined” cause of death, or they're categorized as accidents. Investigators' opinions about the manner of a death (such as suicide, homicide, or accident) aren't necessarily what's entered on a death certificate. Suicides recorded in the state Health Department's vital statistics database do not always appear in OMI records, and vice-versa.

Studies also show that death certificates, and other government records, frequently [misclassify Natives](#) as Hispanic — particularly in urban areas.

The lack of solid data is even more complicated in places like Thoreau, N.M. and communities around it, where a patchwork of state, county, federal and tribal jurisdictions in the Navajo Nation's “checkerboard” country prevents community members and health workers from knowing the exact numbers of suicides over time. The tribe has some numbers. State agencies have others. Other possible suicide deaths may be reported as “undetermined” or as accidents. Reviewing OMI records, New Mexico In Depth also found that Native communities have experienced suicide clusters — a series of two or more suicides in a given area over the course of a year or less.

The suicide clusters on the eastern Navajo Nation and the Mescalero Apache reservation made headlines in 2009 and 2010. But in a review of OMI death investigations conducted between 2000 and 2014, NMID also found evidence of possible Native youth suicide clusters in Gallup, Farmington, the Pueblo of Laguna, and on the Jicarilla Apache reservation.

Roots in Historical Trauma

The death of a young person is demoralizing — for families, peers, and communities as a whole. The loss of even one child — one future leader, spouse, parent, grandparent — can make a tiny tribe's future less certain. A cluster of two or more suicides can devastate a generation.

So few Indigenous people remain today, that every young person is precious, says Corrine Sanchez, who grew up in the Pueblo of San Ildefonso. Sanchez is the executive director of Tewa Women United, a nonprofit serving women and families in Española. The 2010 Census pegged San Ildefonso's population at 527 — and that number includes non-Native people who live at the pueblo. The pueblos of Picuris and Pojoaque are even smaller. Even the Navajo Nation, the largest tribe in the southwestern United States, has a population of only about 298,000. For years academics and public health professionals have used the term “historical trauma” to try to explain the plight of Native people when talking about issues like poverty and health care. Softening the hard truths that lie behind them, those two words can lose their effectiveness.

But Sanchez knows their burden — and she also knows how to explain historical trauma in a way that's hard to forget. At her office in Española, Sanchez moves from behind her desk and pulls out Ziplock bags full of stones.

Pebbles line the bottom of the first, snack-sized bag. She places it inside a larger bag with rocks the size of marbles. And on and on, each bag representing a generation. As the bags get bigger, so too, do the stones.

The rocks represent traumatic events, she says, ticking off the waves of conquest Native people suffered in New Mexico. First the Spanish conquest. Entire villages destroyed and some Native people enslaved. Then came the Mexican-American War; and later the U.S. Army.

Even well into the 20th century, the U.S. government relocated or reorganized tribes. Many Native people left their home reservations and settled in cities, removed from their culture and language. According to the 2010 Census, 25,600 Native Americans live in Albuquerque, away from their homelands and kin. And today, young Native Americans are still prey for the powerful — whether the Catholic priests who allegedly abused children within the Gallup diocese, the men who beat Natives in border towns such as Grants or Farmington, or the schoolyard bullies who tease kids for being different.

Each of these events — and so many more not recorded, often not even spoken of — has weighed down the hearts of generations upon generations of Native people in New Mexico, Sanchez says. And each has accelerated losses of culture and community connection.

When recounting the traumatic events — from enslavement and conquest four hundred years ago to child sexual abuse within the last century's boarding schools — Sanchez's voice remains steady and even.

Finally, she heaves a gallon-sized bag full of stones onto the table.

There's air within each of the sealed bags within sealed bags, Sanchez says. Those gases represent guilt, shame and anger. She explains that her parent's generation grew up with substance abuse and alcoholism. They lost their language. They also began losing memories of old stories and a sense of belonging. “As we pass the bags along, the gas is sealed in — more and more — in each bag,” she says. “People become overwhelmed. They have suicidal thoughts and problems like alcoholism.”

There is hope. But change requires hard work. People must work to heal themselves, she says. To open the bags. To release the anger, guilt, and shame. “We want to protect the most vulnerable, bring back the core values, and honor and strengthen women and children,” she says. “We are ourselves. But we're made up of our past, and the choices we make will affect future generations. We need to think about our responsibility.”

A concentration of risk factors

Over the course of almost two years, NMID reviewed OMI death investigation reports on 161 young Natives' suicides in New Mexico and on the Navajo Nation, including Navajo deaths that occurred across the Arizona border but were investigated by New Mexico OMI between 2000 and 2014.

We compiled data from OMI investigators' reports into spreadsheets for analysis — not to intrude on families' pain or to memorialize lost lives, but to search for clues about why rates are so high among these kids and to get a better sense of what might be done.

Those reports and interviews suggest a concentration of risk factors that lead to youth despair, traditions of silence, and unresolved grief that ripples through families and tight-knit communities, increasing the risk of additional suicide attempts and deaths.

One recent study by public health researchers reveals the concentration of risk factors some youth are confronting.

At a public health conference in Albuquerque last year, University of New Mexico researchers Dornell Pete and Kyle Smith presented a survey they'd administered to more than 1,300 Native Americans from seven New Mexico communities. The survey asked

people about their exposure to adverse childhood experiences like problems with alcohol and physical violence at home, separated or divorced parents, a close family member serving time in jail, physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.

The numbers were off the scale.

Twenty-nine percent of those surveyed had been exposed to four or more of those experiences as children.

But even that number might be low. Since the surveys were conducted face-to-face, researchers say they assumed that some were reluctant or embarrassed to keep answering “yes” to the questions.

The use of alcohol can't be overlooked as a possible contributor to the high rates of suicide. It lowers inhibitions, making impulsive behavior and risk-taking more likely. NMID's analysis of OMI records shows that alcohol was present in just under half of the youth suicides OMI investigated in Native communities. But investigators don't always order lab tests for alcohol, so that number may be artificially low.

Social isolation and alienation amplify alcohol abuse and other risk factors for suicide — including mental illness and readily-available firearms. Health care workers and psychologists call it “thwarted belongingness.” That is, feeling like you don't belong within your community, your peer group, or even your family.

It's clear from the OMI records that investigators consider social and family strife as common precipitating events for youth suicide. Those triggers can include a romantic break-up or an argument with parents or siblings. But those triggers don't tell the entire story, says Susan Casias, a social worker who has worked in suicide prevention for more than a decade.

“What was going on earlier?” asks Albuquerque resident Casias, a member of the Jicarilla Apache tribe in Northwestern New Mexico. “There are always additional issues: Was he in school? Did his family support him? And there are additional issues: domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, rapes, alcohol and drugs?”

To be clear, these risk factors occur in all communities and ethnic groups. But their concentration in some Native communities — coupled with the cumulative burdens of generational trauma — puts children there at particular risk.

Stigmatizing communities where people are already grappling with so many of life's challenges doesn't help. But addressing youth suicide demands acknowledging that there are pockets within New Mexico where children are routinely exposed to factors that increase the risk of suicide, including violence, abuse, poverty and alcohol and drug abuse.

Take the case of two close friends who died together on railroad tracks in western New Mexico. One was a victim of a sexual assault, according to the OMI investigator's report. The other had recently lost her remaining parent to an alcohol-related disease. Her foster parent was rarely home.

Initially, their deaths were considered an accident, a game of “chicken” turned tragic on the railroad tracks. But a persistent OMI investigator learned that one teen left behind a note. Videotape from a camera attached to the front of the 95-ton locomotive, along with interviews with the conductor, made it clear: The children's deaths were not accidental.

In another instance, one 14-year old, who was preceded in death by a brother, took his life at the family's trailer. He was found by another brother. The OMI investigator noted that, when asked, the mother “knew nothing about her son, his friends or how he was doing in school.”

Even vigilant and concerned parents can misunderstand what's happening in their children's lives. Or they may not know how to communicate with their teenagers.

After leaving home on foot and staying out until the early morning hours, a teen was chastised by her worried father, according to one OMI report. After her death by suicide, a cousin told an OMI investigator that the girl had been raped the previous evening.

The importance of listening

Listening is important for preventing suicide. Don't tell a child that his or her concerns are silly, advises Casias, the social worker. “Ask what they are feeling,” she says. “Parents need to understand what's important to their kids. A lot don't. Suicide prevention begins in the home.”

There is a lot to talk about.

In many OMI-investigated cases NMID examined, for example, other children and teens discovered youth suicide victims. Kids as young as two and four years old witnessed a father's or sibling's suicide.

Unresolved, chronic grief — including grief over the loss of loved ones to suicide — appears to play an important role in fueling the state's high suicide rates among Natives.

Within OMI records and obituaries, it's plain to see how pain and sadness diffuse through, and persist within, families and small or tight-knit communities, like waves and ripples from a stone heaved into a pool of water. Obituaries frequently note siblings, uncles, cousins, or parents who preceded young people in death.

And in their notes, many OMI investigators mention that the young people who died by suicide had been distraught or depressed since the deaths of fathers, step-fathers, uncles, cousins or friends.

Grief caused by another person's suicide is becoming more widely recognized among researchers as a risk factor for suicide. And it's compounded when grief cannot be discussed openly with others.

That's why Casias and other suicide-prevention workers want to confront longstanding traditions of silence surrounding death and suicide — traditions that can isolate people when they most need support.

Casias says she once saw villagers avoid the mother of a child who had died by suicide: “Some people who knew her came up the (supermarket) aisle behind her, and when they recognized her, they turned around and went the other way.” After a pause, Casias continues: “That's not right. People say it's tradition, but I say, well, can't you break tradition? Because the fact is, this person lost somebody. Would you do that if their grandmother had died?”



From left to right, Sheldon Sanders, Timothy Anderson, Tayton Vandever, Aaron Galvan, Eliot Parks and Abel Platero wait for their runs at a skate competition held on June 21, 2014, in Thoreau. The event was put on by the local community center to give the youth something positive in which to participate. (Adria Malcolm/New Mexico In Depth)

Direct Link: http://www.daily-times.com/four_corners-news/ci_28184206/choosing-life-native-american-youth-face-higher-suicide

Trauma May Be Woven Into DNA of Native Americans

[Mary Annette Pember](#)

5/28/15

Trauma is big news these days. Mainstream media is full of stories about the dramatic improvements allowing science to see more clearly how trauma affects our bodies, minds and even our genes. Much of the coverage hails the scientific connection between trauma and illness as a breakthrough for modern medicine. The next breakthrough will be how trauma affects our offspring.

The science of epigenetics, literally “above the gene,” proposes that we pass along more than DNA in our genes; it suggests that our genes can carry memories of trauma experienced by our ancestors and can influence how we react to trauma and stress. The Academy of Pediatrics reports that the way genes work in our bodies determines neuroendocrine structure and is strongly influenced by experience. [Neuroendocrine cells help the nervous and endocrine (hormonal) system work together to produce substances such as adrenaline (the hormone associated with the fight or flight response.) Trauma experienced by earlier generations can influence the structure of our genes, making them more likely to “switch on” negative responses to stress and trauma.

In light of this emerging science and how it works with the way we react to trauma, the AAP stated in its publication, [Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Lifelong Consequences of Trauma](#), “Never before in the history of medicine have we had better insight into the factors that determine the health of an individual from infancy to adulthood, which is part of the life course perspective—a way of looking at life not as disconnected stages but as integrated across time,” according to the AAP in their recent publication examining the role of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACES) on our development and health. The now famous 1998 ACES study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente showed that such adverse experiences could contribute to mental and physical illness.



“Native healers, medicine people and elders have always known this and it is common knowledge in Native oral traditions,” according to LeManuel “Lee” Bitsoi, Navajo, PhD Research Associate in Genetics at Harvard University. (Courtesy SACNAS)

Folks in Indian country wonder what took science so long to catch up with traditional Native knowledge. “Native healers, medicine people and elders have always known this and it is common knowledge in Native oral traditions,” according to LeManuel “Lee” Bitsoi, Navajo, PhD Research Associate in Genetics at Harvard University during his presentation at the Gateway to Discovery conference in 2013.

According to Bitsoi, epigenetics is beginning to uncover scientific proof that intergenerational trauma is real. Historical trauma, therefore, can be seen as a contributing cause in the development of illnesses such as PTSD, depression and type 2 diabetes.

What exactly is historical or intergenerational trauma? Michelle M. Sotero, an instructor in Health Care Administration and Policy at the University of Nevada, offers a three-fold definition. In the initial phase, the dominant culture perpetrates mass trauma on a population in the form of colonialism, slavery, war or genocide. In the second phase the affected population shows physical and psychological symptoms in response to the trauma. In the final phase, the initial population passes these responses to trauma to subsequent generations, who in turn display similar symptoms.

According to researchers, high rates of addiction, suicide, mental illness, sexual violence and other ills among Native peoples might be, at least in part, influenced by historical trauma. Bonnie Duran, associate professor in the Department of Health Services at the University of Washington School of Public Health and Director for Indigenous Health Research at the Indigenous Wellness Research Institute says, “Many present-day health disparities can be traced back through epigenetics to a “colonial health deficit,” the result of colonization and its aftermath.”

According to the American Indian and Alaska Native Genetics Research Guide created by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), studies have shown that various behavior and health conditions are due to inherited epigenetic changes.

Authors of the guide refer to a 2008 study by Moshe Szyf at McGill University in Montreal that examined the brains of suicide victims. Szyf and his team found that genes governing stress response in the victim’s hippocampus had been methylated or switched off. Excessive trauma causes us to produce hormones called glucocorticoids which can alter gene expression. Chronic exposure to this hormone can inhibit genes in the hippocampus ability to regulate glucocorticoids. Szyf suggested that the genes were switched off in response to a series of events, such as abuse during childhood. [All victims in the study were abused as children.](#)

Nature or Nurture? It’s Both!

Szyf, in collaboration with another scientist at McGill, Neurobiologist Michael Meaney, did research showing a significant difference in the hippocampus between adults rats raised by attentive and inattentive mothers. Adult offspring of inattentive rat mothers

showed genes regulating sensitivity to stress to be highly methylated. The rats with attentive moms did not.

To test their research they switched the parents for rat babies born to bad and good mothers. The babies born to attentive moms but given to inattentive moms also developed highly methylated genes and grew to be skittish adults. The opposite proved true for babies born to bad moms but given to good moms. As adults the rat babies born to bad moms but raised by good mothers appeared calm.

This research seems to combine the historically polarizing theory of nature versus nurture in determining behavior. Nature is that which is inherited while nurture is the environmental influences.

Native researcher Teresa Brockie PhD, Research Nurse Specialist at the National Institute of Health suggests that such gene methylation is linked to health disparities among Native Americans. In her article in *Nursing and Research and Practice*, she and her research colleagues note that high ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experience) scores have been linked to methylation of genes that regulate the stress response. They further noted that endocrine and immune disorders are also linked to methylation of such genes.

The researchers found that Native peoples have high rates of ACE's and health problems such as posttraumatic stress, depression and substance abuse, diabetes all linked with methylation of genes regulating the body's response to stress. "The persistence of stress associated with discrimination and historical trauma converges to add immeasurably to these challenges," the researchers wrote.

Since there is a dearth of studies examining these findings, the researchers stated they were unable to conclude a direct cause between epigenetics and high rates of certain diseases among Native Americans.

One of researchers, Dr. Jessica Gill, Principal Investigator, Brain Injury Unity, Division of Intramural Research, National Institute of Nursing Research wrote in response to questions to the NIH's public affairs office, "Epigenetic studies provide a unique opportunity to characterize the long-term impact of stressors including historical trauma on the function of genes. The modification of gene function through epigenetic modifications can greatly impact the health of the individual and may underlie some of the health disparities that we observe in populations including Native Americans. This line of research is of great promise for nurse scientists, as it will be instrumental in the promotion of the health and well-being of patients impacted by trauma and stress."

Although epigenetics offers the hope of creating better and more specific medicines and interventions for mental health problems, it also suggests the notion that Native peoples and other ethnic groups may be genetically inferior.

Researchers such as Shannon Sullivan, professor of philosophy at UNC Charlotte, suggests in her article "Inheriting Racist Disparities in Health: Epigenetics and the

Transgenerational Effects of White Racism,” that the science has faint echoes of eugenics, the social movement claiming to improve genetic features of humans through selective breeding and sterilization.

Inherited Resilience

Epigenetics is indeed a hot topic, and pharmaceutical companies are actively searching for epigenetic compounds that will help with learning and memory and help treat depression, anxiety and PTSD.

Many researchers caution, however, that the new science may be getting ahead of itself. “There is a lot of research that needs to be done before we will understand whether and how these processes work,” says Joseph Gone, professor at the University of Michigan and member of the Gros Ventre tribe of Montana.

Scientific developments such as epigenetics can offer exciting new insights not only into how our bodies react not only to trauma but also how we manage to survive it.

Native peoples ability to maintain culture and sense of who they are in the face of such a traumatic history suggests an inherited resilience that bears scientific examination as well, according to Gone.

Isolating and nurturing a resilience gene may well be on the horizon.

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Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/05/28/trauma-may-be-woven-dna-native-americans-160508>

Madison, Wis. school board bans student clothing with ‘Native American team names, logos or mascots that depict negative stereotypes’

By [Eugene Volokh](#) May 28 at 2:20 PM

In this May 1, 2009 file photo, Washington Redskins Marko Mitchell puts his helmet on during their NFL football minicamp practice at their training facility in Ashburn, Va. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File)

The board [just enacted this rule](#), effective in the fall:

Students may not wear clothing with words, pictures or caricatures based on negative stereotypes of a specific gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or disability. Students may not wear shirts, hats or other attire with Native American team names, logos or mascots that depict negative stereotypes. A list of team names, logos and mascots prohibited under this provision is available at all schools and on the District website.

(The School Board tells me that “[t]he list of teams is in development in consultation with your school based and community based advisory groups.”)

But government-run K-12 schools can’t just restrict speech because they think it “depict[s] negative stereotypes.” Speech that is likely to cause [substantial disruption](#) can be restricted, as can speech that contains vulgarities, or promotes drug use or other dangerous conduct that’s illegal for minors. But speech that simply expresses views that some see as negative toward particular races, sexes, religions, sexual orientations, and so on cannot be restricted. As the Seventh Circuit (the federal appeals court that is in charge of federal cases from Wisconsin) held in [Zamecnik v. Indian Prairie School Dist. #204](#),

[The precedents] do not establish a generalized “hurt feelings” defense to a high school’s violation of the First Amendment rights of its students. “A particular form of harassment or intimidation can be regulated ... only if ... the speech at issue gives rise to a well-founded fear of disruption or interference with the rights of others.” *Sypniewski v. Warren Hills Regional Bd. of Education* (3d Cir. 2002). The same court, in *Saxe v. State College Area School District* (3d Cir. 2001) [written by now-Justice Alito -EV], found “little basis for the District Court’s sweeping assertion that ‘harassment’ — at least when it consists of speech targeted solely on the basis of its expressive content — ‘has never been considered to be protected activity under the First Amendment.’ Such a categorical rule is without precedent in the decisions of the Supreme Court or this Court, and it belies the very real tension between anti-harassment laws and the Constitution’s guarantee of freedom of speech.”

And though schools “are entitled to exercise discretion in determining when student speech crosses the line between hurt feelings and substantial disruption of the educational mission,” cases such as *Zamecnik* (which involved a student’s “Be Happy, Not Gay” T-shirt and button) show that schools can’t just assume that a broad range of speech — such as “team names, logos or mascots that depict negative stereotypes” of some identity group — will indeed be disruptive. A policy that’s this broad violates the First Amendment; I hope that it’s promptly challenged and enjoined.

Thanks to [Tom Kamenick of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty](#) for the pointer.

Direct Link: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2015/05/28/madison-wis-school-board-bans-student-clothing-with-native-american-team-names-logos-or-mascots-that-depict-negative-stereotypes/>

Selling Off Apache Holy Land

MAY 29, 2015



Tucson

ABOUT an hour east of Phoenix, near a mining town called Superior, men, women and children of the San Carlos Apache tribe have been camped out at a place called Oak Flat for more than three months, protesting the latest assault on their culture.

Three hundred people, mostly Apache, marched 44 miles from tribal headquarters to begin this occupation on Feb. 9. The campground lies at the core of an ancient Apache holy place, where coming-of-age ceremonies, especially for girls, have been performed for many generations, along with traditional acorn gathering. It belongs to the public, under the multiple-use mandate of the Forest Service, and has had special protections since 1955, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower decreed the area closed to mining — which, like cattle grazing, is otherwise common in national forests — because of its cultural and natural value. President Richard M. Nixon's Interior Department in 1971 renewed this ban.

Despite these protections, in December 2014, Congress promised to hand the title for Oak Flat over to a private, Australian-British mining concern. A fine-print rider trading away the Indian holy land was added at the last minute to the must-pass military spending bill, the National Defense Authorization Act. By doing this, Congress has handed over a sacred Native American site to a foreign-owned company for what may be the first time in our nation's history.

The Apache are occupying Oak Flat to protest this action — to them, a sacrilegious and craven sell-off of a place “where Apaches go to pray,” in the words of the San Carlos Apache tribal chairman, Terry Rambler. The site will doubtless be destroyed for any purpose other than mining; Resolution Copper Mining will hollow out a vast chamber that, when it caves in, will leave a two-mile-wide, 1,000-foot-deep pit. The company itself has likened the result of its planned mining at Oak Flat to that of a nearby meteor crater.

The land grab was sneakily anti-democratic even by congressional standards. For more than a decade, the parcel containing Oak Flat has been coveted by [Rio Tinto](#), Resolution’s parent company — which already mines on its own private land in the surrounding area — for the high-value ores beneath it.

The swap — which will trade 5,300 acres of private parcels owned by the company to the Forest Service and give 2,400 acres including Oak Flat to Resolution so that it can mine the land without oversight — had been attempted multiple times by Arizona members of Congress on behalf of the company. (Among those involved was Rick Renzi, a former Republican representative who was sent to federal prison in February for three years for corruption related to earlier versions of the land-transfer deal.) It always failed in Congress because of lack of support. But this time was different. This time, the giveaway language was slipped onto the defense bill by Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake of Arizona at the 11th hour. The tactic was successful only because, like most last-minute riders, it bypassed public scrutiny.

It’s worth noting that Rio Tinto affiliates have been McCain campaign contributors, and that Mr. Flake, before he made it to Congress, was a paid lobbyist for Rio Tinto Rössing Uranium (a huge uranium mine in Namibia). Mr. McCain and others assert that the mining project will be a boost to the local economy, though it’s unclear how many of the 1,400 promised jobs would be local; a Superior-area miners’ group, in fact, opposes the swap on the basis that it won’t help the local people or economy. Rio Tinto, incidentally, has been called out in the past for environmental devastation.

“Why is this place sacred?” said Wendsler Nosie Sr., a former chairman of the San Carlos Apache, in a recent interview with [Cronkite News](#). “No difference to Mount Sinai. How the holy spirit came to be.” If you don’t want to take his word for it, the archaeological record at Oak Flat contains abundant evidence that the Apache have been here “since well before recorded history,” according to congressional testimony by the Society for American Archaeology.

If Oak Flat were a Christian holy site, or for that matter Jewish or Muslim, no senator who wished to remain in office would dare to sneak a backdoor deal for its destruction into a spending bill — no matter what mining-company profits or jobs might result. But this is Indian religion. Clearly the Arizona congressional delegation isn’t afraid of a couple of million conquered natives.

The truth is that for Mr. McCain, Mr. Flake and others who would allow this precious public land to be destroyed, it's not only the Indians who are invisible. The rest of us are also ghosts, remnants of a quaint idea of democracy.

Oak Flat may still be saved, albeit with difficulty, since the bill's language stipulates quite simply that 60 days after the federal "environmental impact statement" is complete, the land will belong to Resolution — in other words, that the swap will occur no matter what the environmental study says. But, like all laws and pieces of laws, it can be reversed by new legislative language.

The deal is an impressive new low in congressional corruption, unworthy of our country's ideals no matter what side of the aisle you're on. It's exactly the kind of cynical maneuvering that has taught the electorate to disrespect politicians — a disdain for government that hurts everyone. If ever there was a time for Congress to prove its moral mettle to the public, this is that time. The rider should be repealed.

Lydia Millet is the [author](#), most recently, of the novel "Mermaids in Paradise," and a contributing opinion writer.

Direct Link: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/29/opinion/selling-off-apache-holy-land.html?_r=0